MICK TAKEUCHI
1
KEEP OUT
Bound Beauty

THE SOUL go!comi OF MANGA

Round Beauty

Legend says that fated lovers are bound together by an invisible red thread. Most people think it's superstition, but seventeen-year-old Chiyako knows better – she can see them! Yearning to be an independent adult, she's struggling to earn enough money to move out of her parents' house. Her path is clear, until a chance encounter with a mysterious group of hot guys known as the Tyers shows her that she has the power to pull all of fate's strings...though doing so binds her into the form of a child!

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Bound Beauty

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Bound Beauty

STORY AND ART BY
MICK TAKEUCHI

VOLUME 1

go!comi

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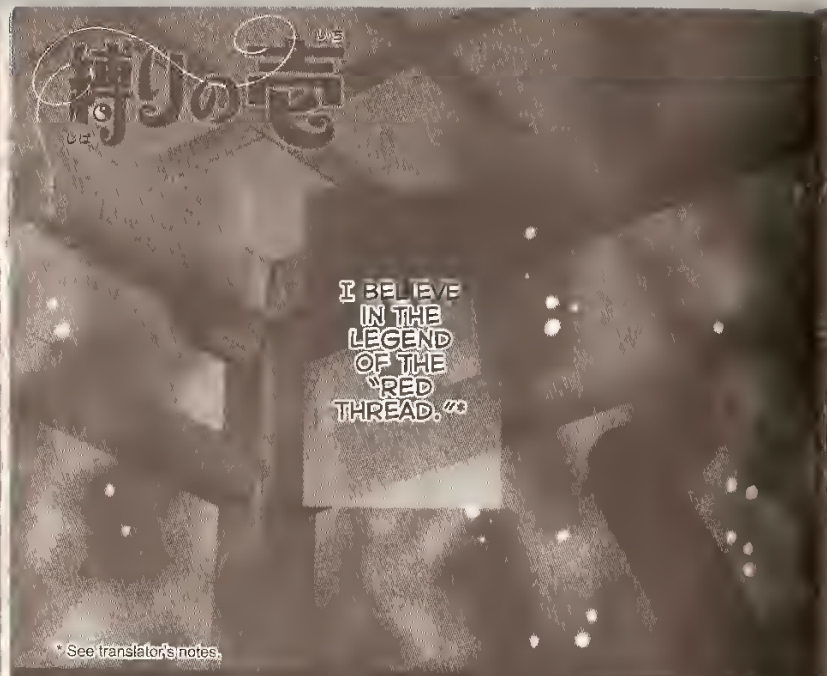

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First Binding

糸の巻

...SAW A RED THREAD FOR MYSELF.

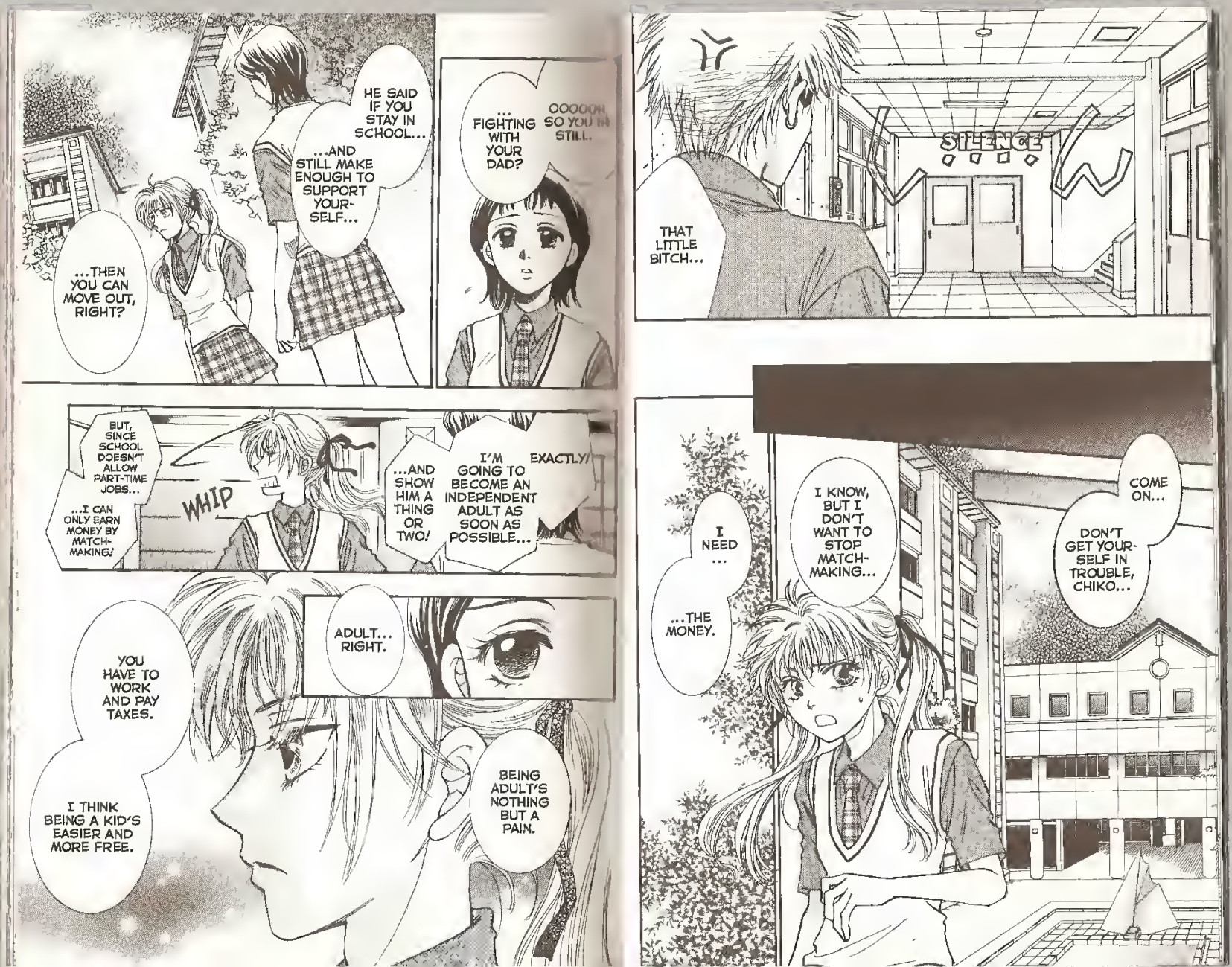
OH, NO, NO, NO!
YOU HAVE TO BREAK UP WITH THAT GUY.
HE'S TWO-TIMING YOU.
THE RED THREAD ...
IT'S GOING OFF IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.
WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE, MATCHMAKER CHIKO'S FORTUNE-TELLING IS ALWAYS DEAD ON!
THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
NO WAY! FOR REAL!?
SHOCK

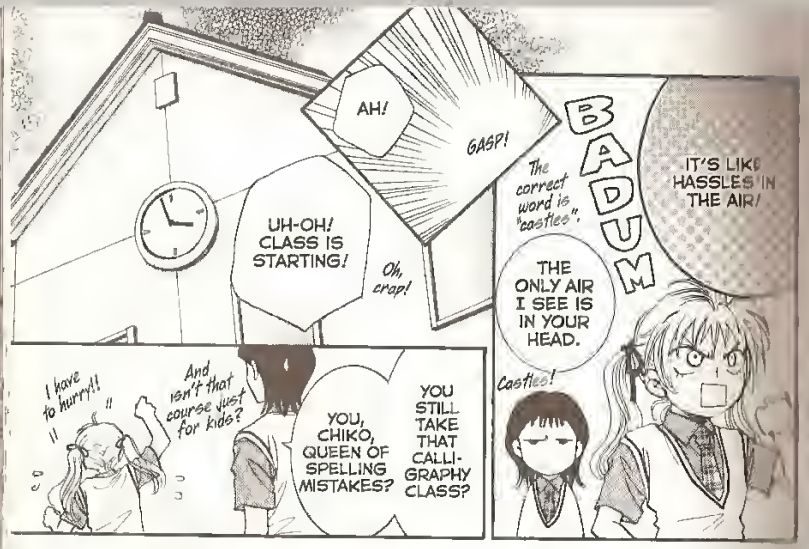
SAIKOGANE

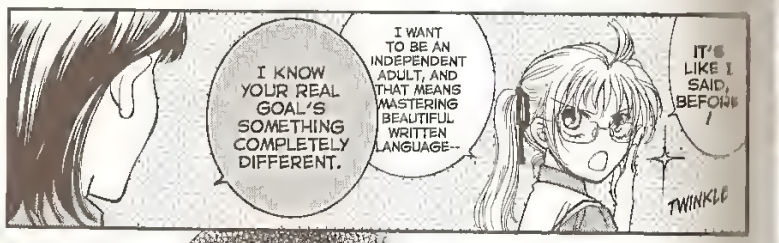
CHIKO-SAN'S LOVE FORTUNES ARE SAFE, RELIABLE, SPEEDY, AND REASON...
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY!
...able?
SO YOU'RE CHIYAKO GOTO*, FREAK?
*see name page
AND JUST WHO MIGHT YOU BE, WEIRDO?

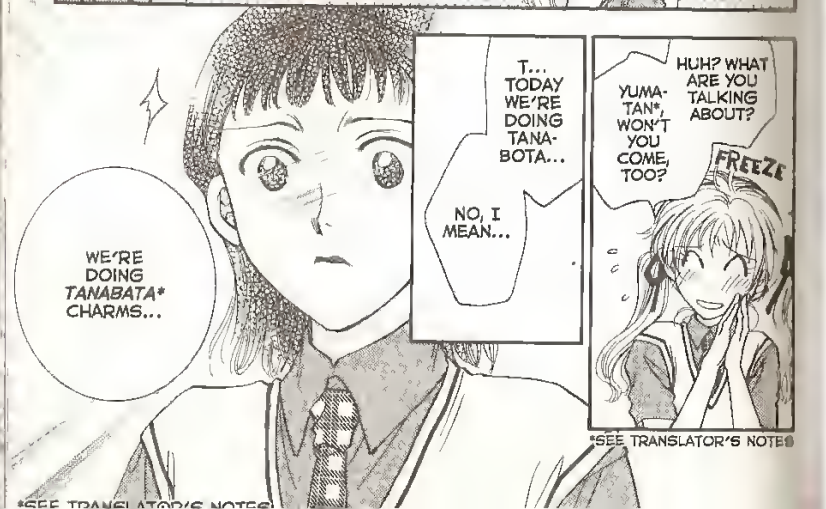
GIVE ME A BREAK ...
EVER SINCE I WAS INVOLVED IN A FIRE AS A KID...
...I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE'S "RED THREADS".
LOVE
FORTUNE
I'M NOT TECHNICALLY "FORTUNE-TELLING".
I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW OR WHY, BUT...
...THIS FREAK ABILITY HAS ITS UPSIDES!
Much obliged ♡
Boop...
OKAY... IF YOU SAY SO...
LOOKS LIKE BUSINESS IS BOOMING, HUH?
SO, WHO'S NEXT?
ICHI-MURA IN SOPHO-MORE ROOM D.
THEN TSUTSUMI AND KITA-CHAN ON THE GIRLS' TENNIS TEAM.

DON'T GET SO COCKY WITH YOUR LITTLE "MATCHMAKING" SHOP.
CHILL
GRAB
IF YOU DON'T WANNA GET HURT, YOU'D BETTER BE A GOOD GIRL, AND-
AH...!
HUH!?
TURN
OH, MY GOD!! A FULLY NUDE VERSION OF THE ASAKUSA SAMBA CARNIVAL!!*
THEY SAY HE'S HEAD OF A GANG.
OR MAYBE THE SECOND IN LINE OF A YAKUZA FAMILY!
YOU KNOW HIM?
Know him!?
HOLD IT, CHIKO!
YOU'RE MESSING WITH THE WRONG GUY!
Graaah !!
HE'S HIROTSUNA TACHIBANA* FROM THE JUNIOR CLASS.
HE'S A DANGEROUS GUY, FAMOUS FOR HIS UN-CONTROLLABLE TEMPER.
*see name page
I HAVE TO ADMIT...
TATTOOS
RCINGS
...THERE ARE WARNING SIGNS ALL OVER HIM...
SLAM
QUIT WHISPERING!
...HE WANTS A CUT OF MY FORTUNE-TELLING PROFITS BECAUSE I'M ON HIS TURF?
YOU THINK THAT MAYBE...
WHY IS A GUY LIKE HIM CONFRONTING ME!?
DOM
あっ
P55T
P55T


HE SAID IF YOU STAY IN SCHOOL...
...AND STILL MAKE ENOUGH TO SUPPORT YOURSELF...
...THEN YOU CAN MOVE OUT, RIGHT?
OOOOOH, SO YOU'RE STILL...
...FIGHTING WITH YOUR DAD?
SILENCE
THAT LITTLE BITCH...
BUT, SINCE SCHOOL DOESN'T ALLOW PART-TIME JOBS...
...I CAN ONLY EARN MONEY BY MATCH-MAKING!
WHIP
...AND SHOW HIM A THING OR TWO!
I'M GOING TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT ADULT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...
EXACTLY!
ADULT... RIGHT.
YOU HAVE TO WORK AND PAY TAXES.
I THINK BEING A KID'S EASIER AND MORE FREE.
BEING ADULT'S NOTHING BUT A PAIN.
I NEED ...
...THE MONEY.
I KNOW, BUT I DON'T WANT TO STOP MATCH-MAKING...
COME ON... DON'T GET YOURSELF IN TROUBLE, CHIKO...

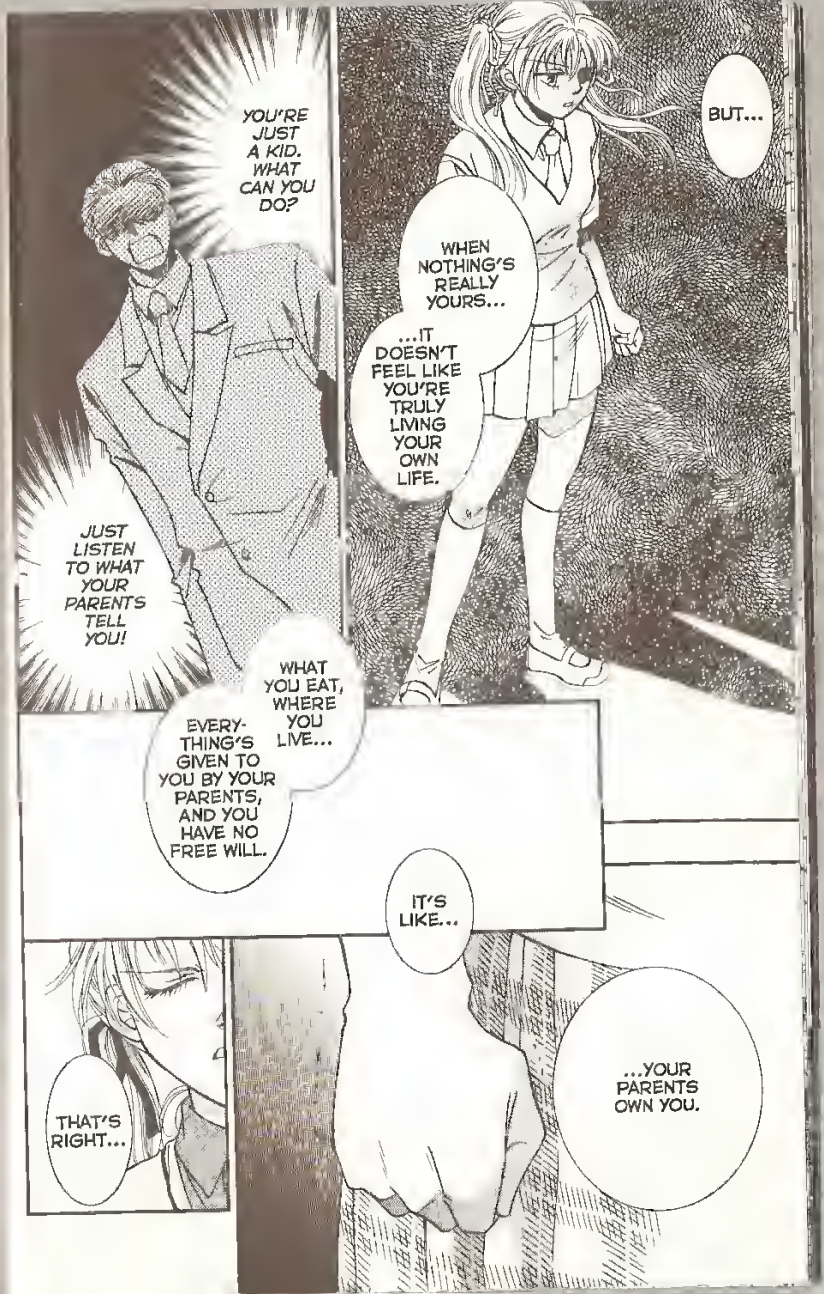

AH!
GASP!
UH-OH! CLASS IS STARTING!
Oh, crap!
BADUM
The correct word is "castles".
IT'S LIKE HASSLES IN THE AIR!
THE ONLY AIR I SEE IS IN YOUR HEAD.
Castles!
I have to hurry!!
And isn't that course just for kids?
YOU, CHIKO, QUEEN OF SPELLING MISTAKES?
YOU STILL TAKE THAT CALLI-GRAPHY CLASS?

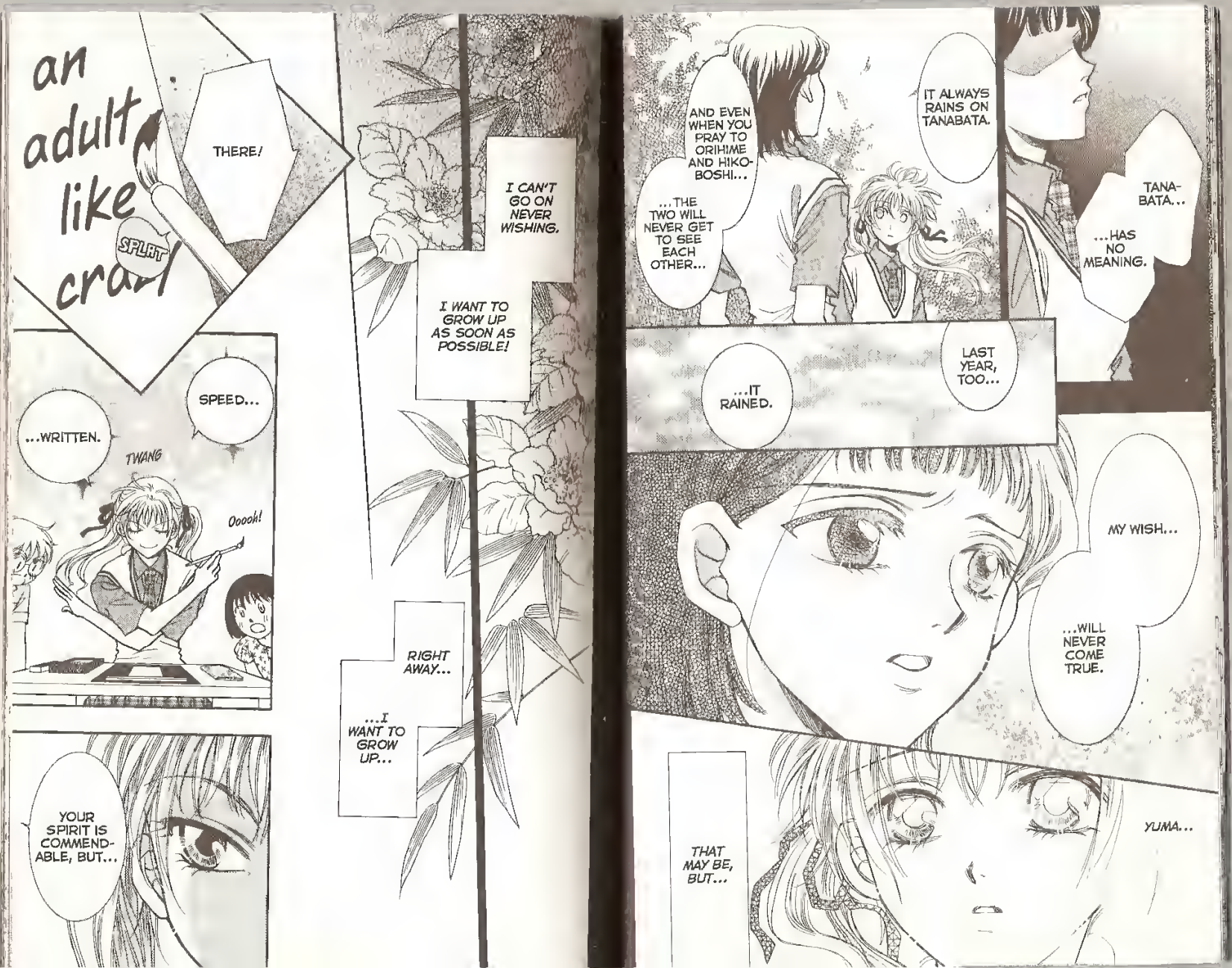

I KNOW YOUR REAL GOAL'S SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
I WANT TO BE AN INDEPENDENT ADULT, AND THAT MEANS MASTERING BEAUTIFUL WRITTEN LANGUAGE--
IT'S LIKE I SAID, BEFORE!
TWINKLE


WE'RE DOING TANABATA* CHARMS...
T... TODAY WE'RE DOING TANA-BOTA...
NO, I MEAN...
YUMA-TAN*, WON'T YOU COME, TOO?
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
FREEZE

*SEE TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

*SEE TRANSLATOR'S NOTES


YOU'RE JUST A KID. WHAT CAN YOU DO?
JUST LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR PARENTS TELL YOU!
BUT...
WHEN NOTHING'S REALLY YOURS...
...IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE YOU'RE TRULY LIVING YOUR OWN LIFE.
WHAT YOU EAT, WHERE YOU LIVE...
EVERY-THING'S GIVEN TO YOU BY YOUR PARENTS, AND YOU HAVE NO FREE WILL.
IT'S LIKE...
...YOUR PARENTS OWN YOU.
THAT'S RIGHT...


an adult like crap!
SPLAT
THERE!
...WRITTEN.
SPEED...
TWANG
Ooooh!
YOUR SPIRIT IS COMMEND-ABLE, BUT...
I CAN'T GO ON NEVER WISHING.
I WANT TO GROW UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
RIGHT AWAY...
...I WANT TO GROW UP...
THAT MAY BE, BUT...
AND EVEN WHEN YOU PRAY TO ORIHIME AND HIKO-BOSHI...
...THE TWO WILL NEVER GET TO SEE EACH OTHER...
IT ALWAYS RAINS ON TANABATA.
TANA-BATA...
...HAS NO MEANING.
LAST YEAR, TOO...
...IT RAINED.
MY WISH...
...WILL NEVER COME TRUE.
YUMA...

THERE'S ONE MORE REASON WHY I WANT TO BECOME AN AOULT.

ANO THAT IS THIS PERSON HERE. MASTER AKEO NAGUMO.*

I CAN'T!!

ARE YOU FOCUSING?

THROB

THROB

THROB

*see name page

I want to become an adult and get married like crazy

MAKE MONEY ○

MARRY ×

WHAT!?

...ARE YOU SURE YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY "MAKE MONEY"?

I mean, I don't care if you want to "get married like crazy" but you still put in one too many strokes for the character

RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS.

FOCUS ON TRANSMITTING YOUR SENSES TO THE TIP OF THE BRUSH.

THADUMP

THADUMP

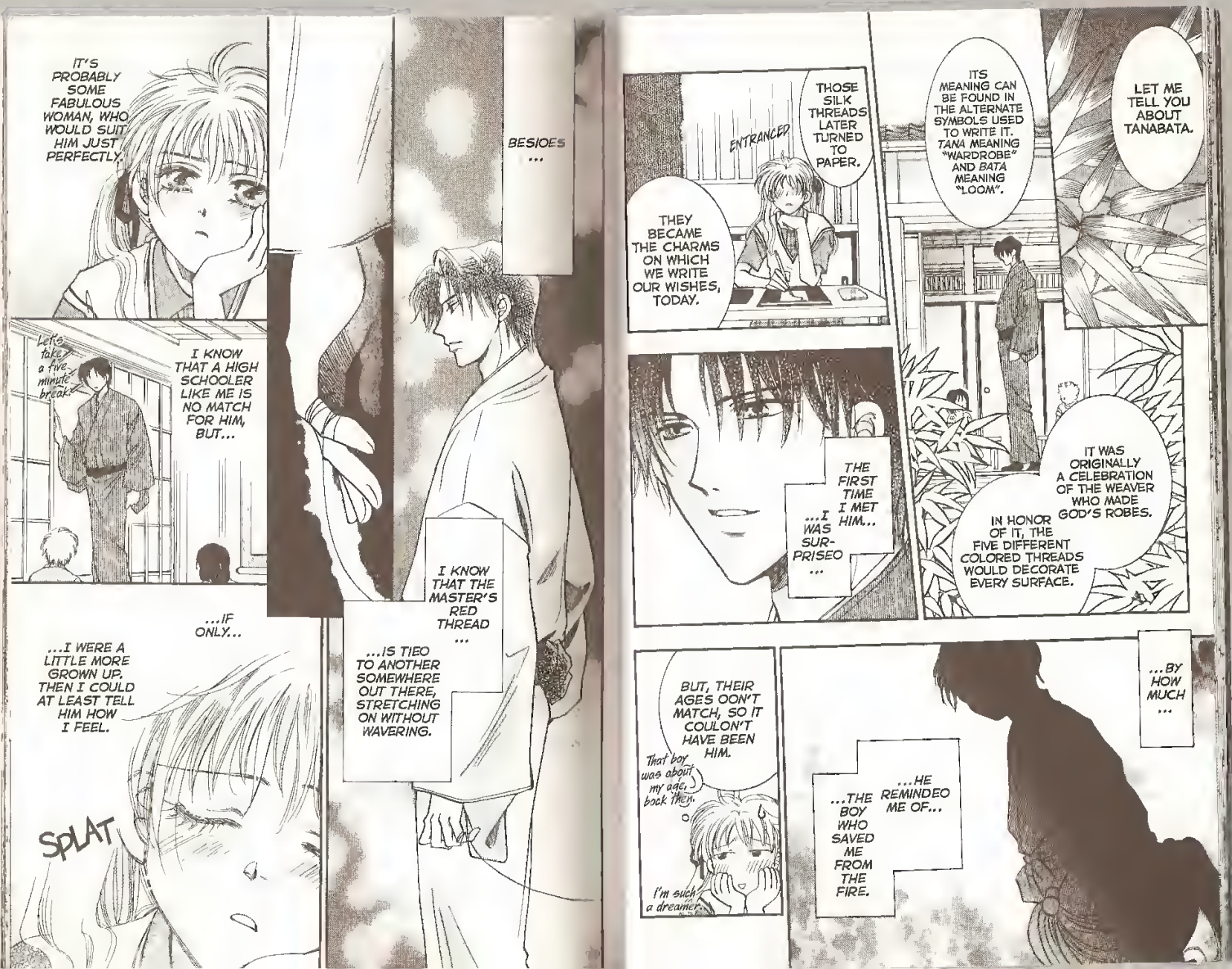
THADUMP

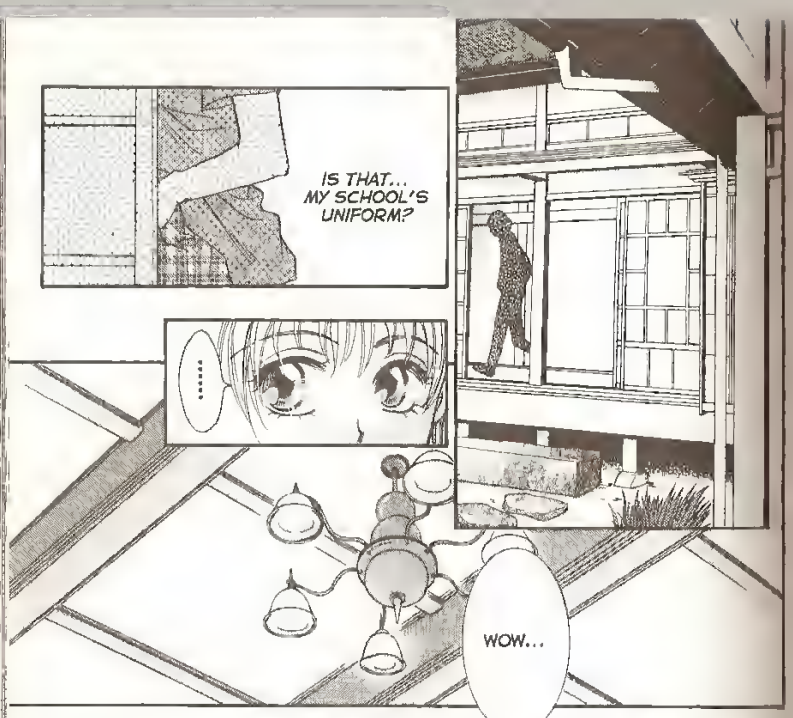
WHEN YOU WRITE...

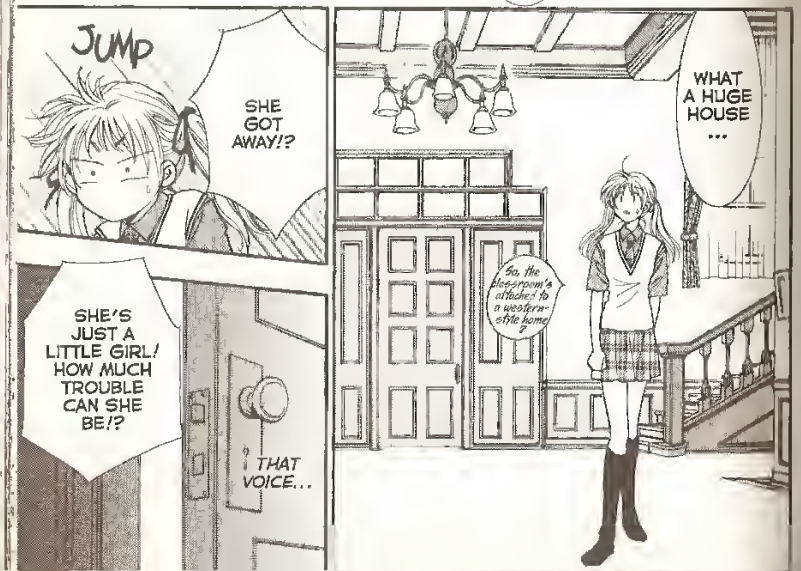
...YOU TENSE UP TOO MUCH.

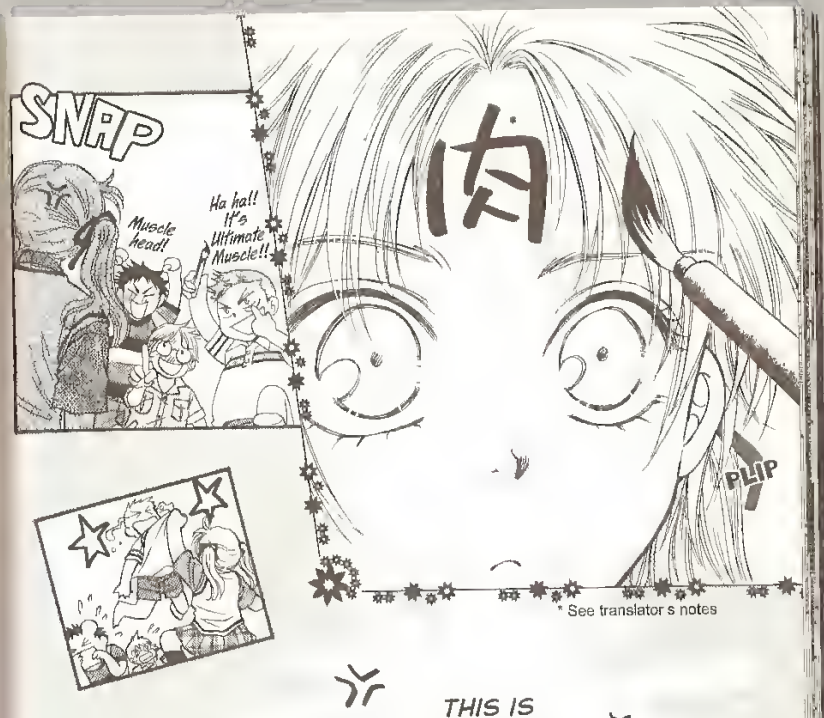
THADUMP

TOUCH


IT'S PROBABLY SOME FABULOUS WOMAN, WHO WOULD SUIT HIM JUST PERFECTLY.
Let's take a five-minute break.
I KNOW THAT A HIGH SCHOOLER LIKE ME IS NO MATCH FOR HIM, BUT...
...IF ONLY...
...I WERE A LITTLE MORE GROWN UP. THEN I COULD AT LEAST TELL HIM HOW I FEEL.
SPLAT
BESIDES ...
I KNOW THAT THE MASTER'S RED THREAD ...
...IS TIED TO ANOTHER SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, STRETCHING ON WITHOUT WAVERING.
ENTRANCED
THOSE SILK THREADS LATER TURNED TO PAPER.
THEY BECAME THE CHARMS ON WHICH WE WRITE OUR WISHES, TODAY.
ITS MEANING CAN BE FOUND IN THE ALTERNATE SYMBOLS USED TO WRITE IT. TANA MEANING "WARDROBE" AND BATA MEANING "LOOM".
LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT TANABATA.
THE FIRST TIME I MET HIM...
...I WAS SURPRISED ...
IT WAS ORIGINALLY A CELEBRATION OF THE WEAVER WHO MADE GOD'S ROBES.
IN HONOR OF IT, THE FIVE DIFFERENT COLORED THREADS WOULD DECORATE EVERY SURFACE.
BUT, THEIR AGES DON'T MATCH, SO IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN HIM.
That boy was about my age, back then.
I'm such a dreamer.
...THE BOY WHO SAVED ME FROM THE FIRE.
...HE REMINDED ME OF...
...BY HOW MUCH ...

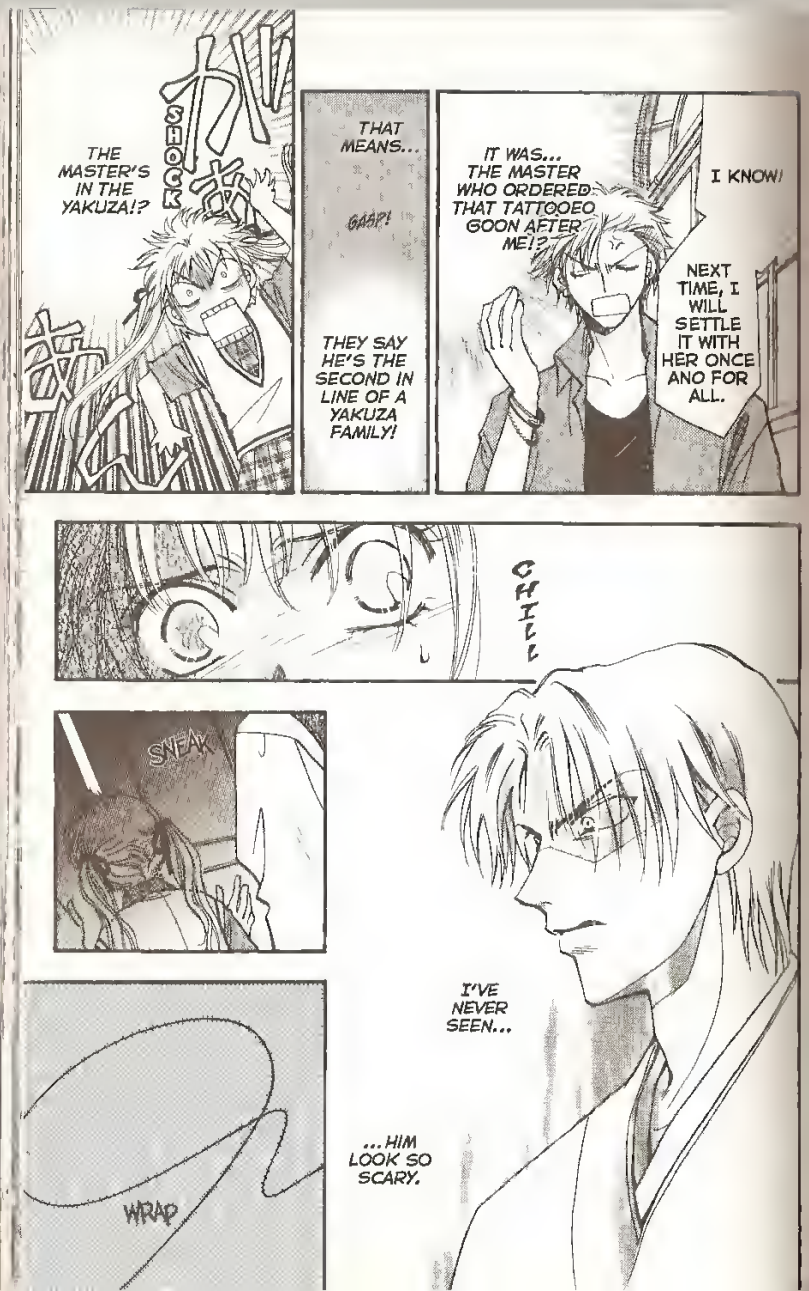



JUMP
SHE GOT AWAY!?
SHE'S JUST A LITTLE GIRL! HOW MUCH TROUBLE CAN SHE BE!?
THAT VOICE...
WHAT A HUGE HOUSE ...
So, the playroom's attached to a western-style home?

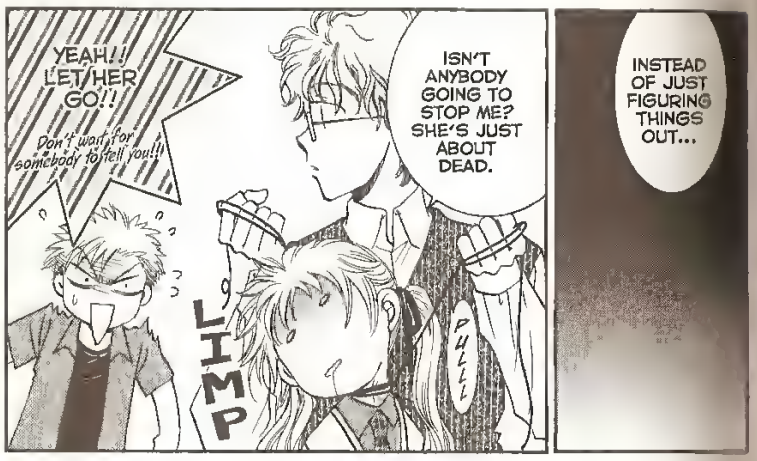


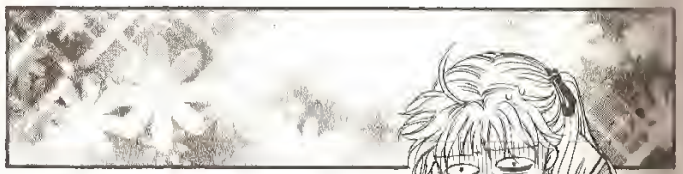
* See translator s notes

THIS IS WHY I HATE KIDS!!


THE MASTER'S IN THE YAKUZA!?
GROOO
THAT MEANS...
GAAP!
THEY SAY HE'S THE SECOND IN LINE OF A YAKUZA FAMILY!
IT WAS... THE MASTER WHO ORDERED THAT TATTOOED GOON AFTER ME!?
I KNOW!
NEXT TIME, I WILL SETTLE IT WITH HER ONCE AND FOR ALL.
CHILL
SNEAK
WRAP
I'VE NEVER SEEN...
...HIM LOOK SO SCARY.

IT'S THAT GUY!!
AND THE MASTER!?
WHY IS THAT TATTOOED THUG...
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU...
...TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET RID OF THAT "MATCH-MAKER"!
FREEZE
HUH!?
...TALKING WITH THE MASTER!?



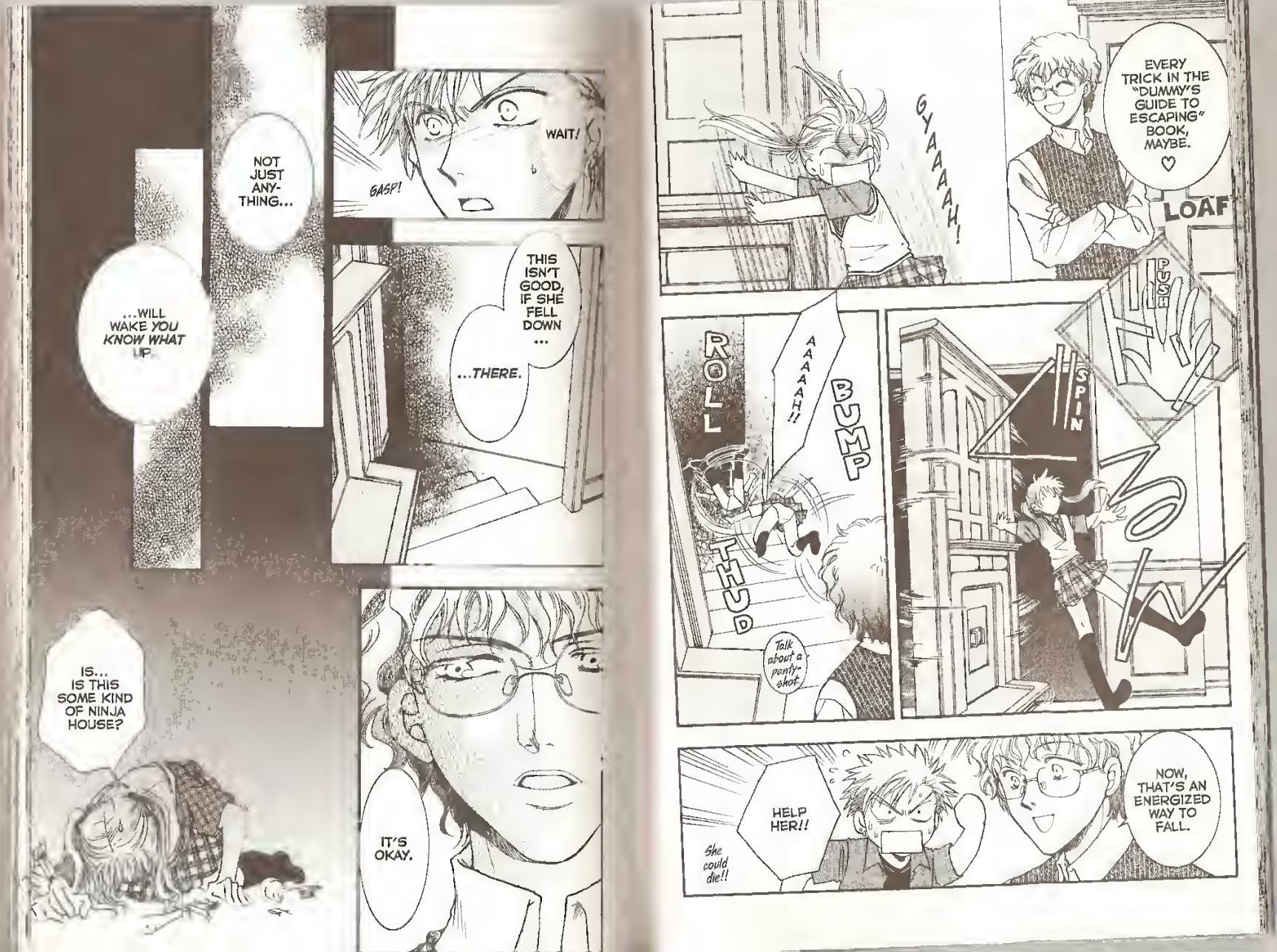


I...
I CAN SEE FLOWERS EVERY-WHERE...
WHEEZE
WHEEZ
I'm supposed to be the heroine. What gives?
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT THE MATCHMAKER WAS ONE OF YOUR VERY OWN STUDENTS, AKEO-SAN.

*see name page

Everybody knows portable shrine parades are only moved by men!
Isn't that how she got away, last time?
DASH!
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
WHO ARE THOSE GUYS!?
WAS PLAYING MATCHMAKER SO WRONG!?
...ONE THING IS FOR SURE.
I REALLY DON'T GET ANY OF THIS, BUT...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
IF I CAN PULL EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK, I'LL GET AWAY SCOT-FREE!
DASH!
IT'S BAD NEWS!

Buried in concrete and sunk
Sent abroad
UPS Overseas Delivery
HAVING TO GET ROUGH!?
GRAB
THAT'S EASY!
...WE CAN FINISH THIS WHOLE EPISODE WITHOUT HAVING TO GET ROUGH WITH HER!
ONCE WE GET HER TO SAY SHE'LL QUIT MATCH-MAKING ...
B...
TEARY
BUT ...
THADUMP
POINT
WHERE!?
AAAAH!! IT'S A PORTABLE SHRINE PARADE WITH A CAST OF DOUBLE D CUPS!!


NOT JUST ANY-THING...
...WILL WAKE YOU KNOW WHAT UP.
WAIT!
GASP!
THIS ISN'T GOOD, IF SHE FELL DOWN ...
...THERE.
IS... IS THIS SOME KIND OF NINJA HOUSE?
IT'S OKAY.
GYAAAAH!
EVERY TRICK IN THE "DUMMY'S GUIDE TO ESCAPING" BOOK, MAYBE. ♡
LOAF
PUSH
SPIN
ROLL
AAAAAH!!
BUMP
THUD
Talk about a panty-shot.
HELP HER!!
She could die!!
NOW, THAT'S AN ENERGIZED WAY TO FALL.

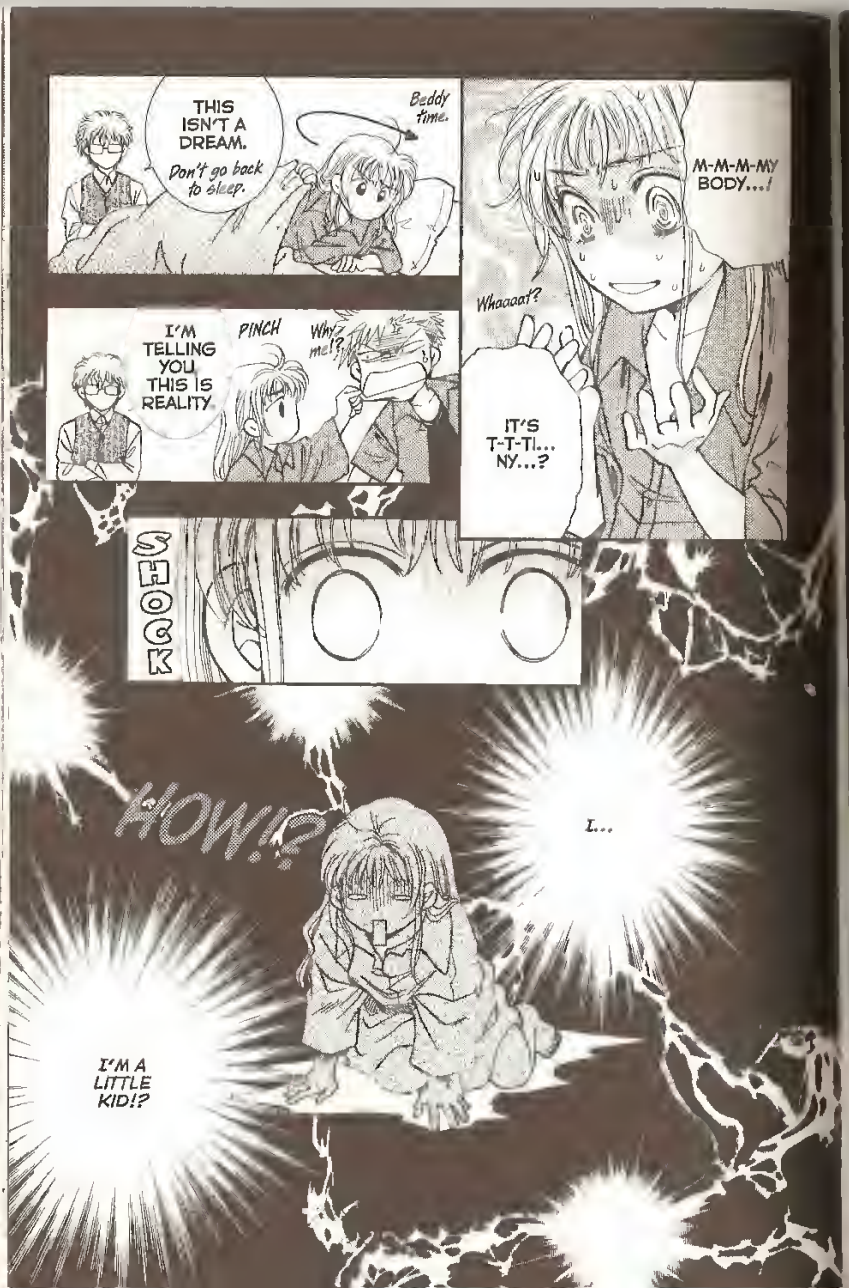
FLASH!
WHAT'S IT DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
HUH!?
HUMMMM
!!
WRRP

Uuugh...
GREAT... AND NOW I HEAR SOMETHING BREAKING.
BUMP
CRACK
GAH! I CUT MY HAND!
I can't believe I survived that, even when it drew blood!
A SPOOL... OF WHITE THREAD?
WHERE HAVE I SEEN THIS BEFORE...?
It's glowing? Looks fluorescent.
THAT BOY WAS HOLDING ONE!!

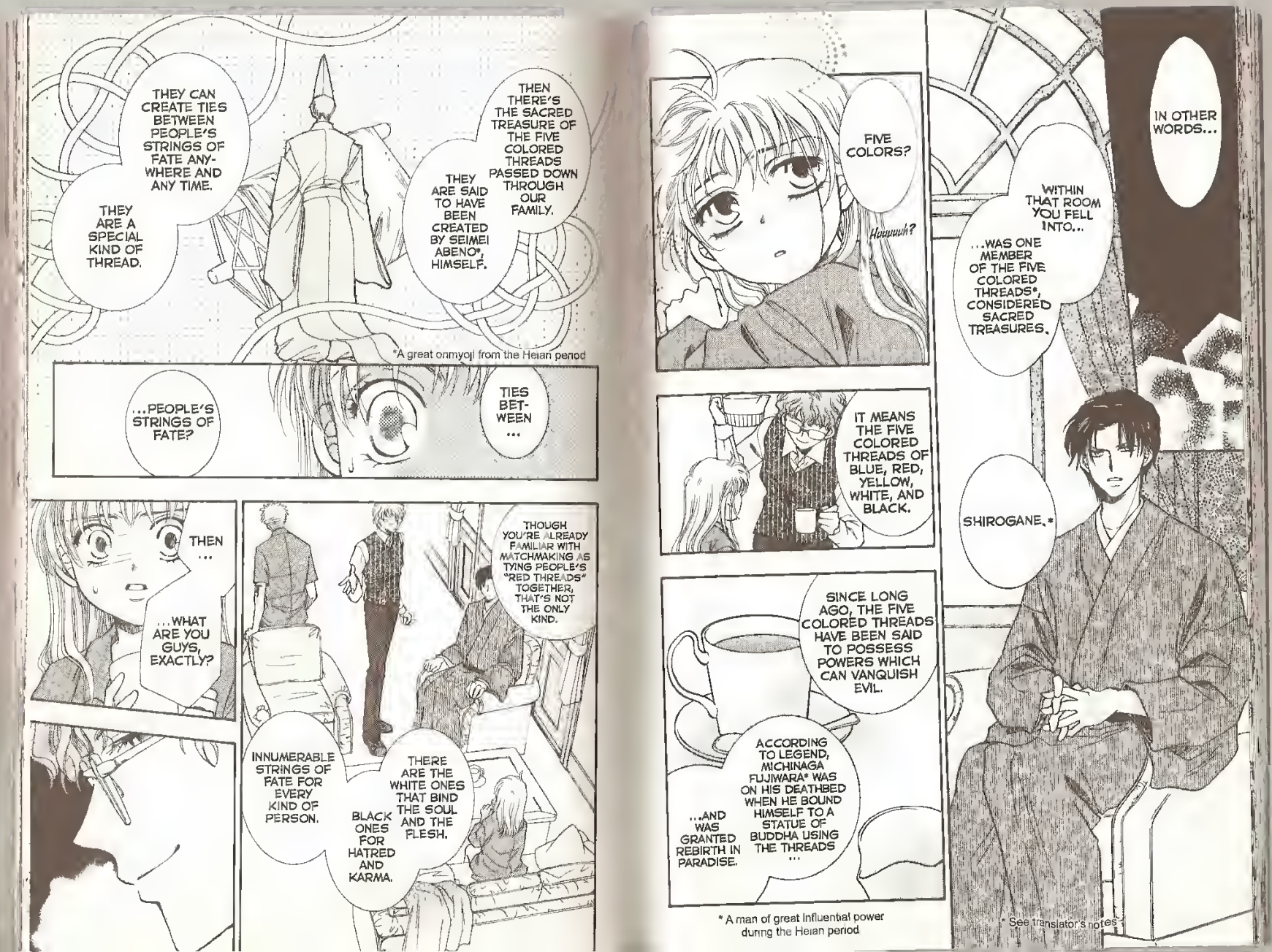
I'M GOING TO DIE LOOKING LIKE A SILKWORM?
WITHOUT EVER GROWING UP?
EVER MEETING THAT BOY!?
NO!!
MY... BODY..
CRUSH
IT'S BEING ... TORN APART ....
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING.
WHAT IS THIS THING!?
WRAP
WRAP
WRAP
WAH!
WHOA! AH!!
GOBLENE
OW ...
STRAIN
SQUEEZE
IT'S HURTING ME!!
TAUT
OW!

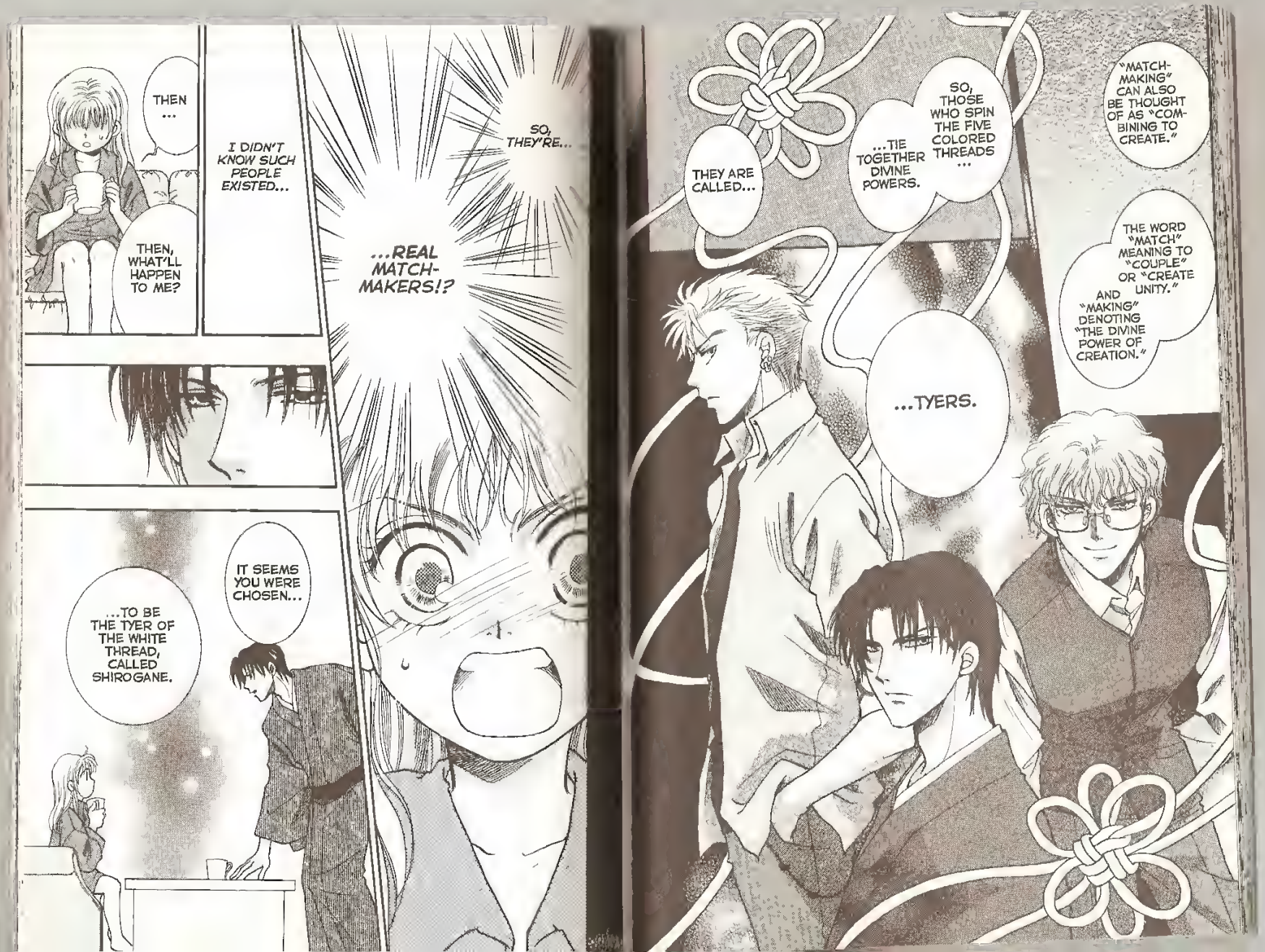
TINY
I GOT ALL WRAPPED UP IN THIS WEIRD THREAD...
SQUEEZE
WHAT...
...HAPPENED TO ME...?
Huh?
?
?
DROOP
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A LOOK FOR YOUR-SELF? ♪
WELL, THE THING IS...
TELLING YOU TO STAY CALM WON'T DO ANY GOOD, BUT...
UH... HOW DO I PUT THIS?

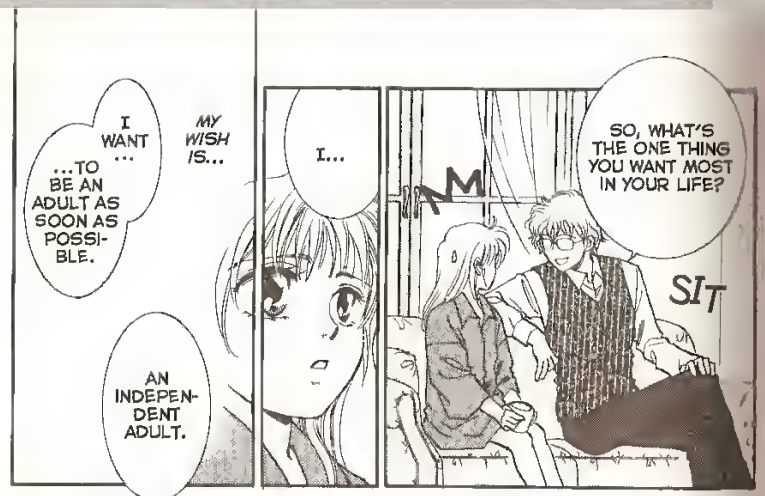
DON'T EVEN JOKE WITH ME!!
HUH?
THE TATTOOED GUY AND CHOKING DEMON ARE HERE, TOO.
SO, YOU'RE AWAKE.
MASTER...
JUMP

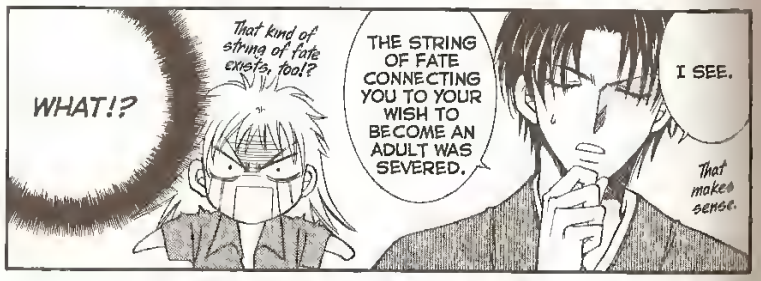

THIS ISN'T A DREAM.
Don't go back to sleep.
Beddy time.
I'M TELLING YOU THIS IS REALITY
PINCH
Why me!?
M-M-M-MY BODY...!
Whaaaat?
IT'S T-T-TI... NY...?
SHOCK
HOW!?
I...
I'M A LITTLE KID!?

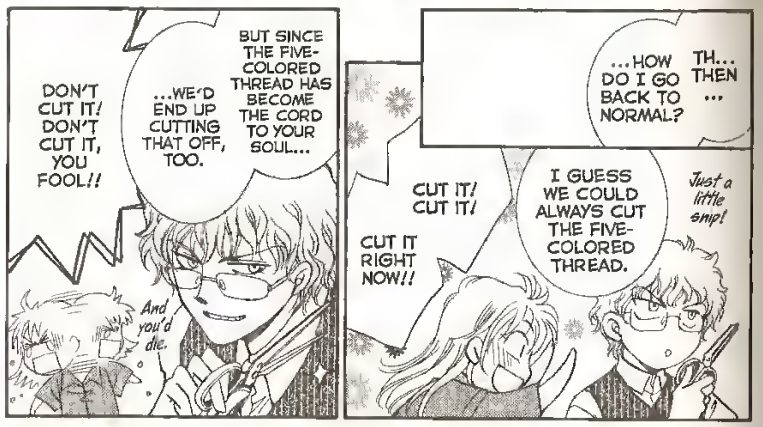
WHA...
WHAT IS THIS!?
AYAAAAA!!
IT'S JUST AS THEY SAY. SEEING A THING IS DIFFERENT FROM HEARING ABOUT IT. ♪
You're a monster!!

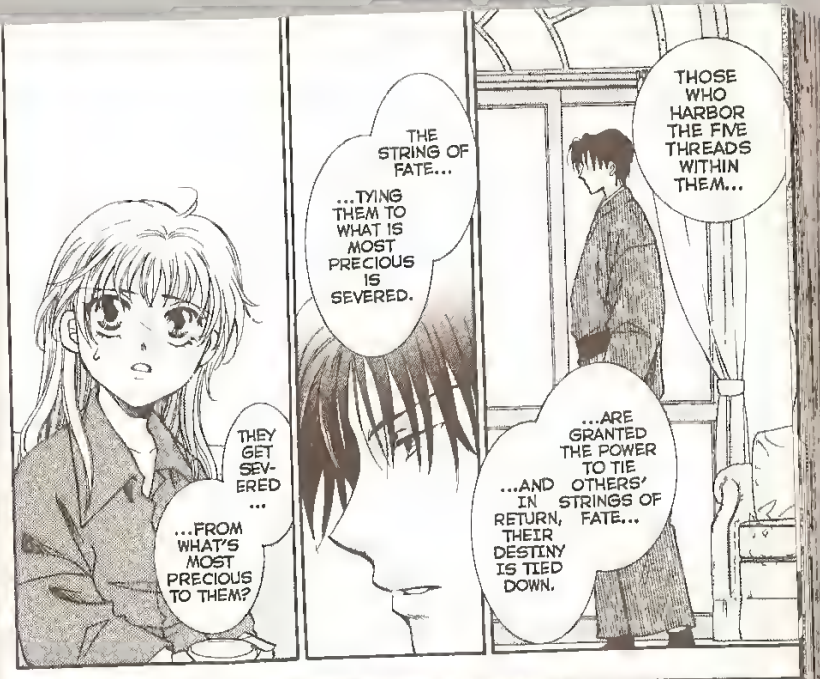

THEY CAN CREATE TIES BETWEEN PEOPLE'S STRINGS OF FATE ANYWHERE AND ANY TIME.
THEY ARE A SPECIAL KIND OF THREAD.
THEY ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN CREATED BY SEIMEI ABENO*, HIMSELF.
THEN THERE'S THE SACRED TREASURE OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS PASSED DOWN THROUGH OUR FAMILY.
*A great onmyoji from the Heian period
...PEOPLE'S STRINGS OF FATE?
TIES BETWEEN ...
THEN ...
...WHAT ARE YOU GUYS, EXACTLY?
THOUGH YOU'RE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH MATCHMAKING AS TYING PEOPLE'S "RED THREADS" TOGETHER, THAT'S NOT THE ONLY KIND.
INNUMERABLE STRINGS OF FATE FOR EVERY KIND OF PERSON.
BLACK ONES FOR HATRED AND KARMA.
THERE ARE THE WHITE ONES THAT BIND THE SOUL AND THE FLESH.
FIVE COLORS?
Hmmmm?
IT MEANS THE FIVE COLORED THREADS OF BLUE, RED, YELLOW, WHITE, AND BLACK.
SINCE LONG AGO, THE FIVE COLORED THREADS HAVE BEEN SAID TO POSSESS POWERS WHICH CAN VANQUISH EVIL.
ACCORDING TO LEGEND, MICHINAGA FUJIWARA* WAS ON HIS DEATHBED WHEN HE BOUND HIMSELF TO A STATUE OF BUDDHA USING THE THREADS ...
...AND WAS GRANTED REBIRTH IN PARADISE.
*A man of great influential power during the Heian period
IN OTHER WORDS...
WITHIN THAT ROOM YOU FELL INTO...
...WAS ONE MEMBER OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS*, CONSIDERED SACRED TREASURES.
SHIROGANE.*
*See translator's notes

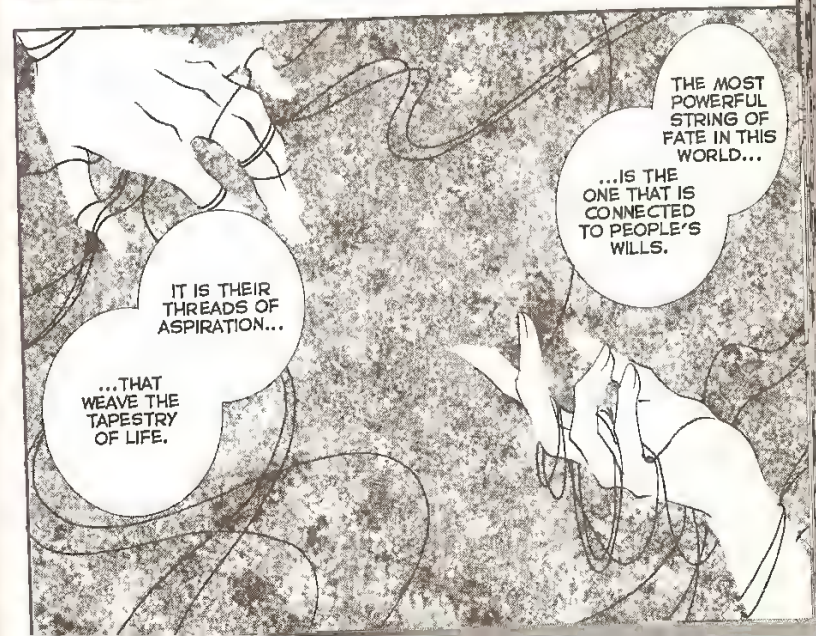

THEN ...
THEN, WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO ME?
I DIDN'T KNOW SUCH PEOPLE EXISTED...
SO, THEY'RE...
...REAL MATCH-MAKERS!?
IT SEEMS YOU WERE CHOSEN...
...TO BE THE TYER OF THE WHITE THREAD, CALLED SHIROGANE.
THEY ARE CALLED...
...TIE TOGETHER DIVINE POWERS.
SO, THOSE WHO SPIN THE FIVE COLORED THREADS ...
"MATCH-MAKING" CAN ALSO BE THOUGHT OF AS "COMBINING TO CREATE."
THE WORD "MATCH" MEANING TO "COUPLE" OR "CREATE UNITY." AND "MAKING" DENOTING "THE DIVINE POWER OF CREATION."
...TYERS.

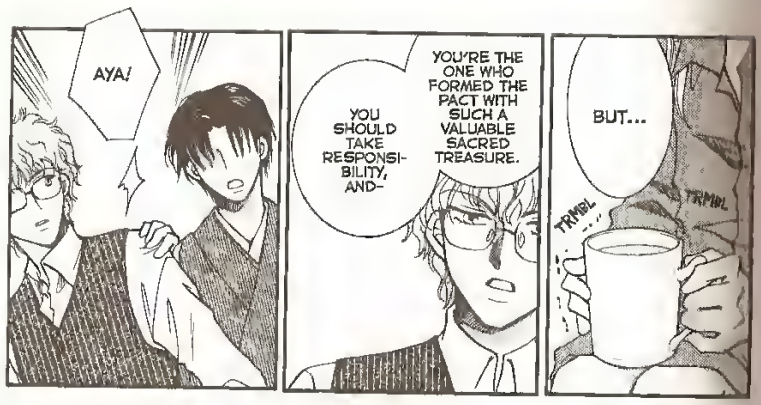

I WANT ...
...TO BE AN ADULT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
MY WISH IS...
AN INDEPENDENT ADULT.
I...
SO, WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU WANT MOST IN YOUR LIFE?
SIT

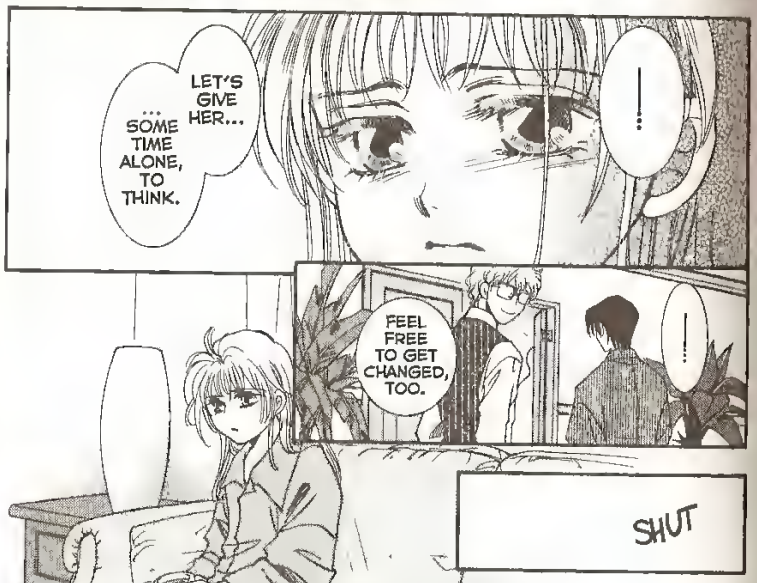

WHAT!?
That kind of string of fate exists, too!?
THE STRING OF FATE CONNECTING YOU TO YOUR WISH TO BECOME AN ADULT WAS SEVERED.
I SEE.
That makes sense.


DON'T CUT IT! DON'T CUT IT, YOU FOOL!!
...WE'D END UP CUTTING THAT OFF, TOO.
BUT SINCE THE FIVE-COLORED THREAD HAS BECOME THE CORD TO YOUR SOUL...
And you'd die.
...HOW DO I GO BACK TO NORMAL?
TH... THEN ...
CUT IT! CUT IT!
CUT IT RIGHT NOW!!
I GUESS WE COULD ALWAYS CUT THE FIVE-COLORED THREAD.
Just a little snip!

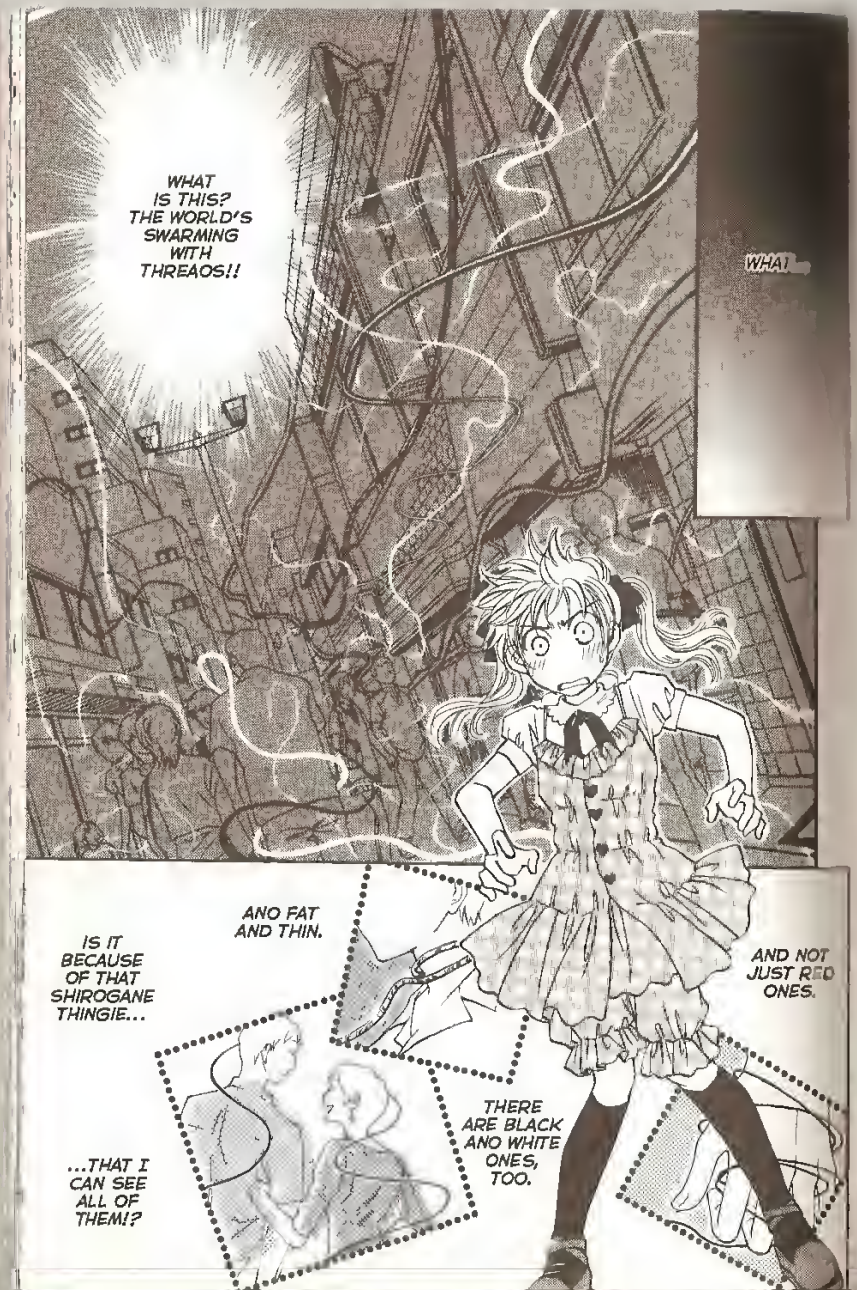

THEY GET SEVERED ...
...FROM WHAT'S MOST PRECIOUS TO THEM?
THE STRING OF FATE...
...TYING THEM TO WHAT IS MOST PRECIOUS IS SEVERED.
...AND IN RETURN, THEIR DESTINY IS TIED DOWN.
...ARE GRANTED THE POWER TO TIE OTHERS' STRINGS OF FATE...
THOSE WHO HARBOR THE FIVE THREADS WITHIN THEM...


IT IS THEIR THREADS OF ASPIRATION...
...THAT WEAVE THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE.
THE MOST POWERFUL STRING OF FATE IN THIS WORLD...
...IS THE ONE THAT IS CONNECTED TO PEOPLE'S WILLS.

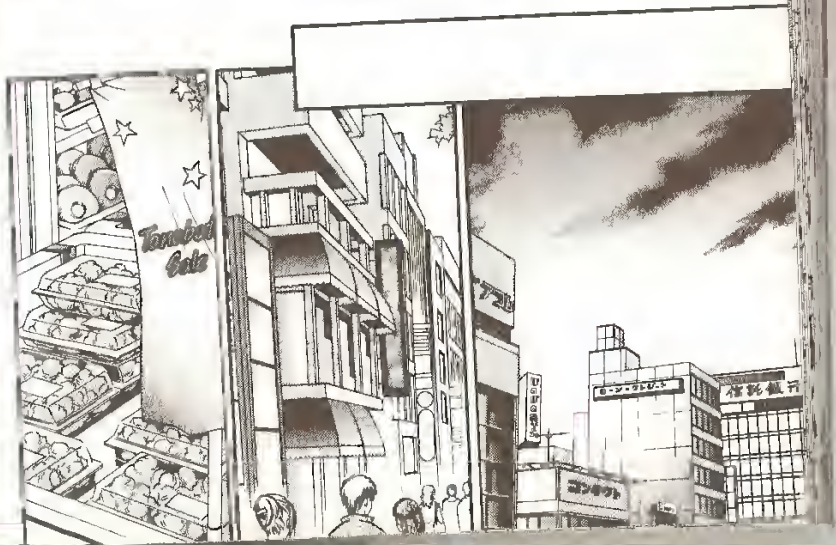

AYA!
YOU SHOULD TAKE RESPONSI-BILITY, AND-
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO FORMED THE PACT WITH SUCH A VALUABLE SACRED TREASURE.
BUT...
TRMBL
TRMBL

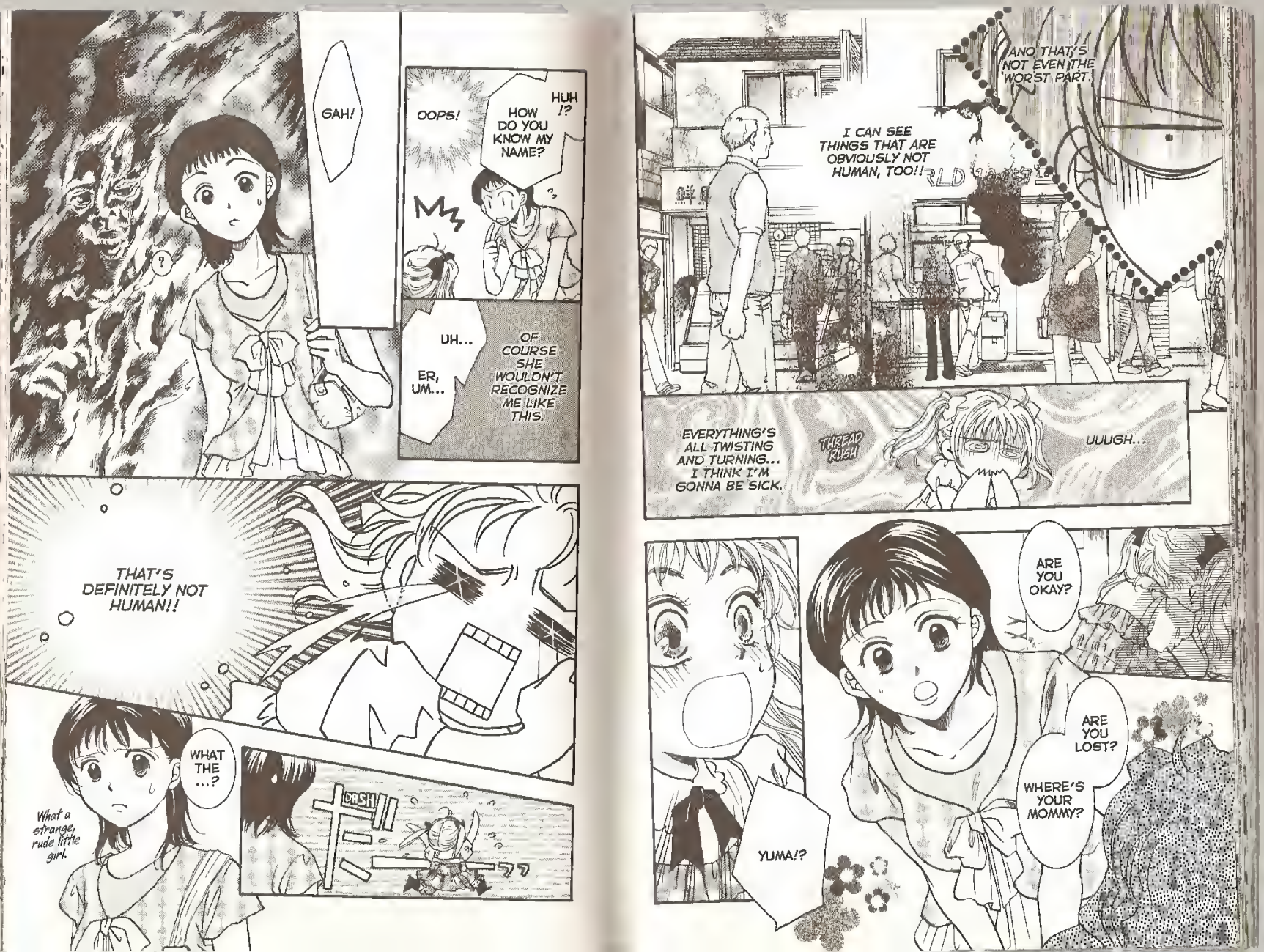

LET'S GIVE HER...
... SOME TIME ALONE, TO THINK.
!!
FEEL FREE TO GET CHANGED, TOO.
!
SHUT

ISN'T THERE ANY OTHER WAY!?
IF THERE WERE, WE'D HAVE DONE IT!
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S HAD TO PAY A PRICE.

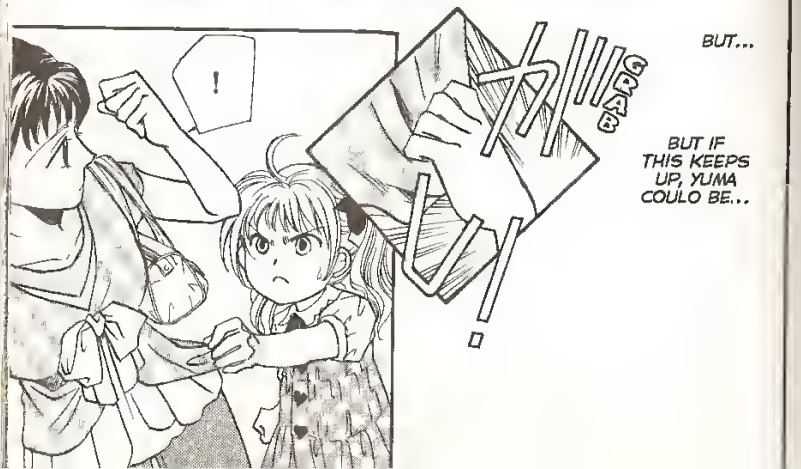

WHAT IS THIS? THE WORLD'S SWARMING WITH THREADS!!
WHA!
ANO FAT AND THIN.
IS IT BECAUSE OF THAT SHIROGANE THINGIE...
AND NOT JUST RED ONES.
THERE ARE BLACK ANO WHITE ONES, TOO.
...THAT I CAN SEE ALL OF THEM!?

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
WHY THAT...
...STINKING BRAT!!
This is a disaster...
I really like her, now!
The clever little thing!

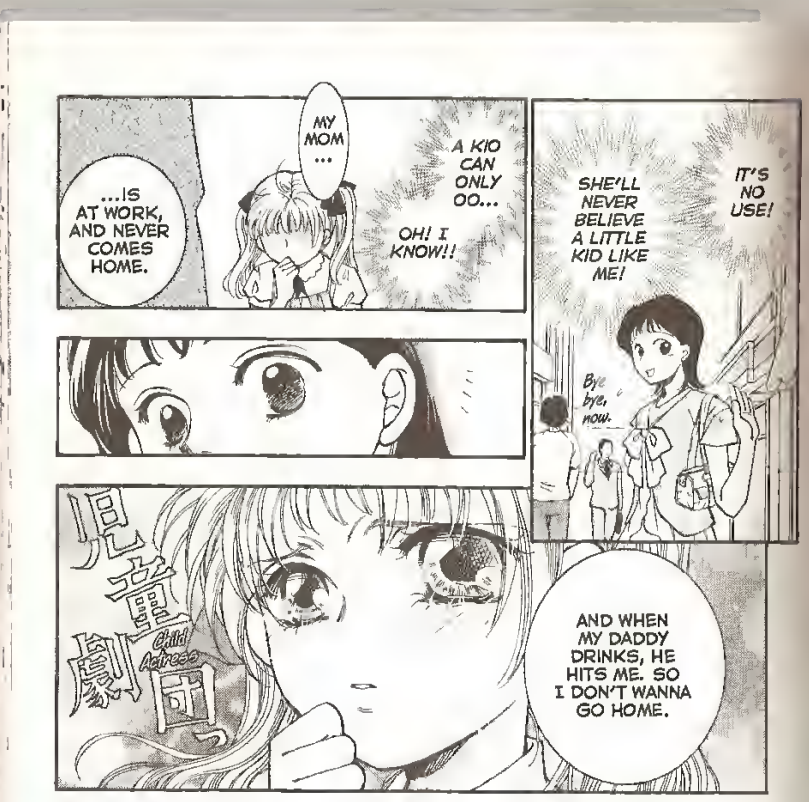

Tombed Gate

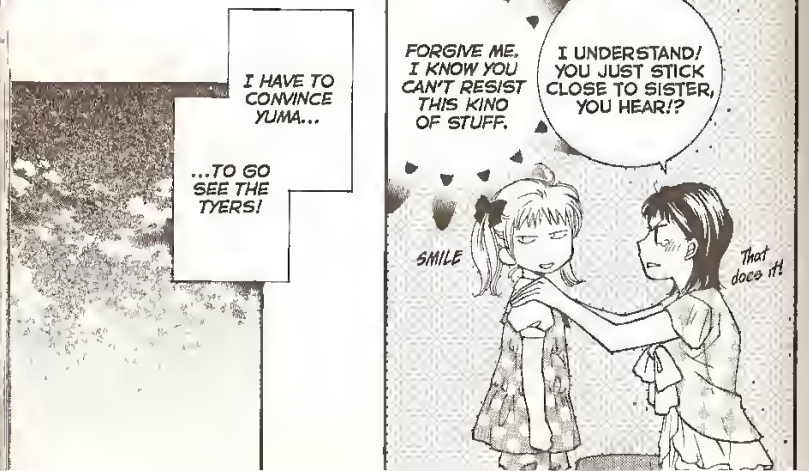

GAH!
OOPS!
HUH!?
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
UH...
ER, UM...
OF COURSE SHE WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE ME LIKE THIS.
THAT'S DEFINITELY NOT HUMAN!!
WHAT THE ...?
What a strange, rude little girl.
DASH
AND THAT'S NOT EVEN THE WORST PART.
I CAN SEE THINGS THAT ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT HUMAN, TOO!!
EVERYTHING'S ALL TWISTING AND TURNING... I THINK I'M GONNA BE SICK.
THREAD RUSH
UUUGH...
YUMA!?
ARE YOU OKAY?
ARE YOU LOST?
WHERE'S YOUR MOMMY?

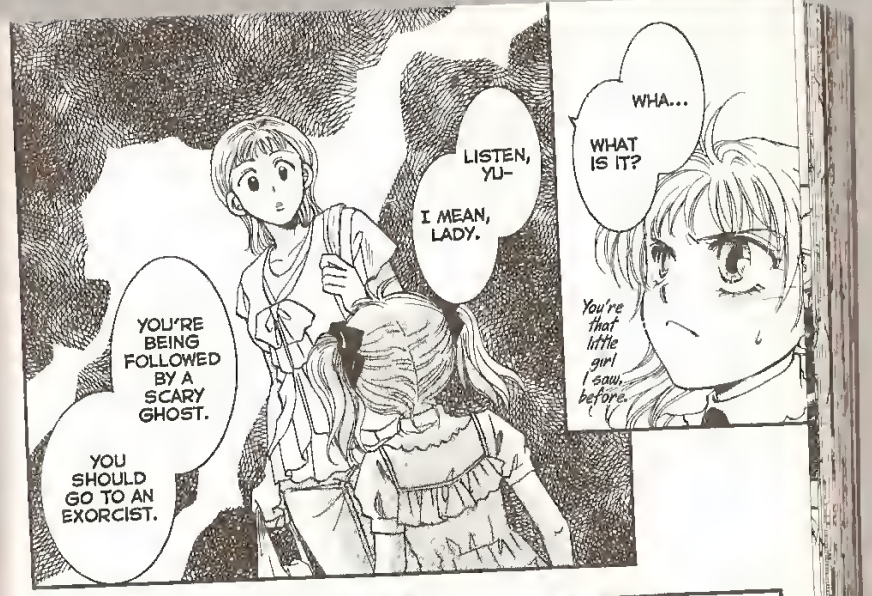
...I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, MYSELF!
GASP!
BUT THOSE THREE CAN!
WHAT DO I DO!?
I KNOW IT HAS TO DO WITH THAT BURNT CORPSE, BUT...
We need you to take responsibility!
SNIP
SNIP
STILL! I KNOW THEY'D KILL ME FIRST!!

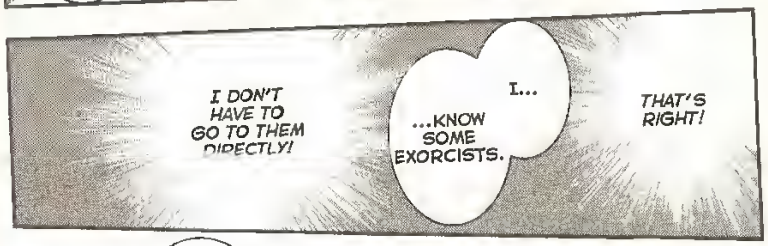

!
BUT...
BUT IF THIS KEEPS UP, YUMA COULD BE...

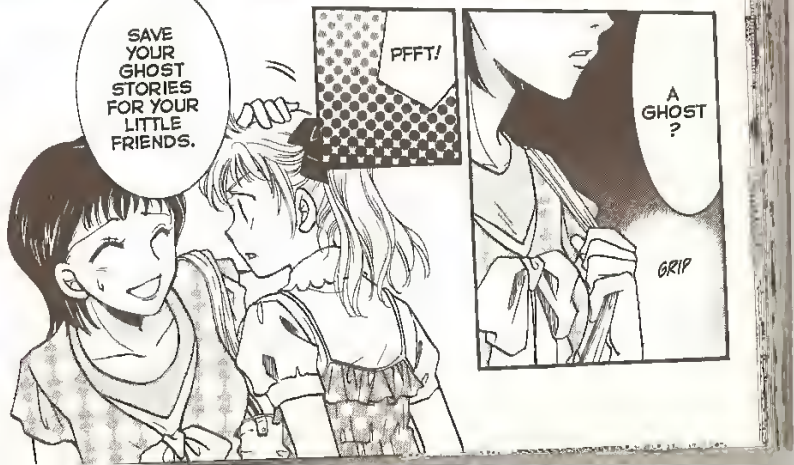
PEEK
Tanabata Sale
Scuuuuuy...
W-W-WHAT IS THAT THING?
Or a burnt corpse's ghost?
THE GHOST OF A BURNT CORPSE!?
WAIT!
THAT COULD MEAN REALLY BAD NEWS FOR HER!!
WHY IS THE THREAD ATTACHED TO YUMA BURNING?
IT'S HER WHITE THREAD...
THE WHITE THREAD THAT BINDS THE SOUL TO THE FLESH.


...IS AT WORK, AND NEVER COMES HOME.
MY MOM ...
A KID CAN ONLY OO...
OH! I KNOW!!
SHE'LL NEVER BELIEVE A LITTLE KID LIKE ME!
IT'S NO USE!
Bye bye, now.
児童劇団
Child Actress
AND WHEN MY DADDY DRINKS, HE HITS ME. SO I DON'T WANNA GO HOME.

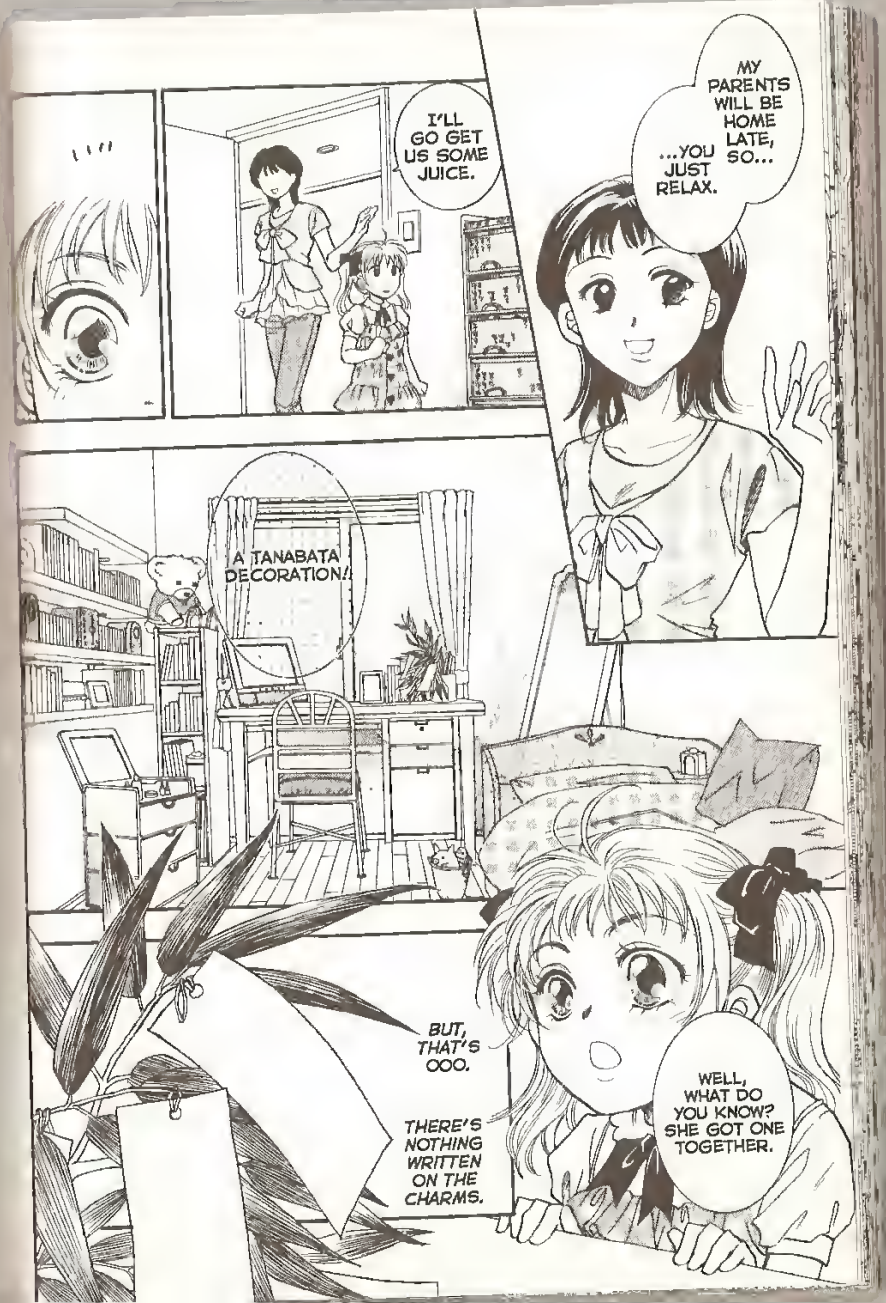

I HAVE TO CONVINCE YUMA...
...TO GO SEE THE TYERS!
FORGIVE ME. I KNOW YOU CAN'T RESIST THIS KIND OF STUFF.
I UNDERSTAND! YOU JUST STICK CLOSE TO SISTER, YOU HEAR!?
SMILE
That does it!


YOU SHOULD GO TO AN EXORCIST.
YOU'RE BEING FOLLOWED BY A SCARY GHOST.
LISTEN, YU- I MEAN, LADY.
WHA...
WHAT IS IT?
You're that little girl I saw, before.

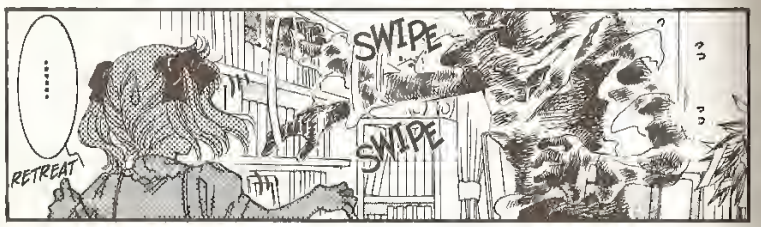

I DON'T HAVE TO GO TO THEM DIRECTLY!
I... ...KNOW SOME EXORCISTS.
THAT'S RIGHT!

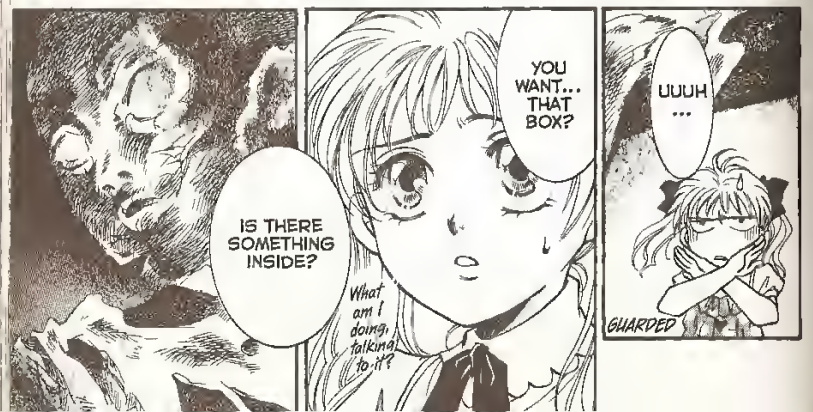

SAVE YOUR GHOST STORIES FOR YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS.
PFFT!
A GHOST ?
GRIP

CHIRP
MY WISH WILL NEVER COME TRUE.
WHIP
!


I'LL GO GET US SOME JUICE.
MY PARENTS WILL BE HOME LATE, SO... ...YOU JUST RELAX.
A TANABATA DECORATION!
BUT, THAT'S OOO.
THERE'S NOTHING WRITTEN ON THE CHARMS.
WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? SHE GOT ONE TOGETHER.

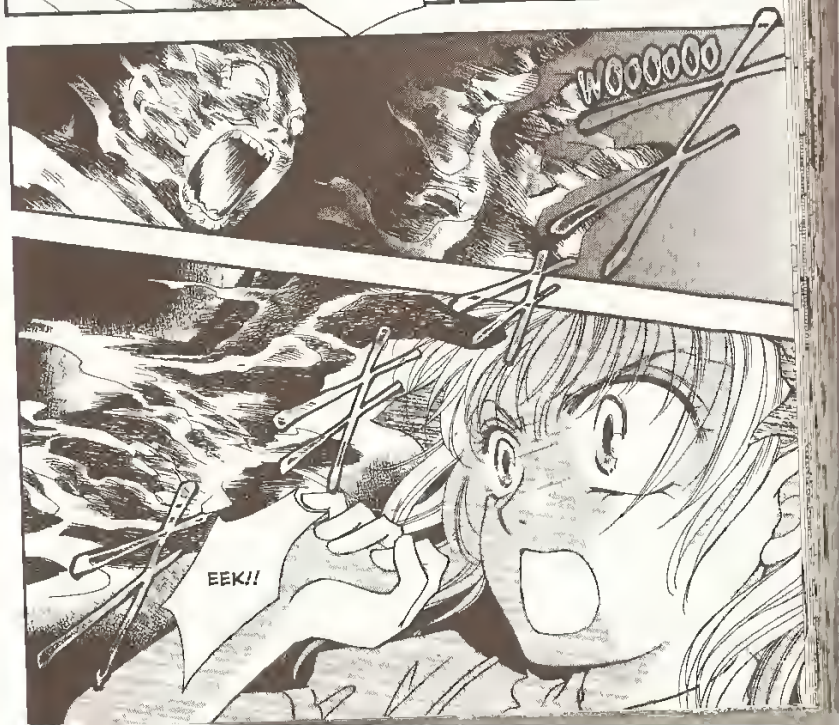
REACH
HUH?


.....
RETREAT
SWIPE
SWIPE
??
??

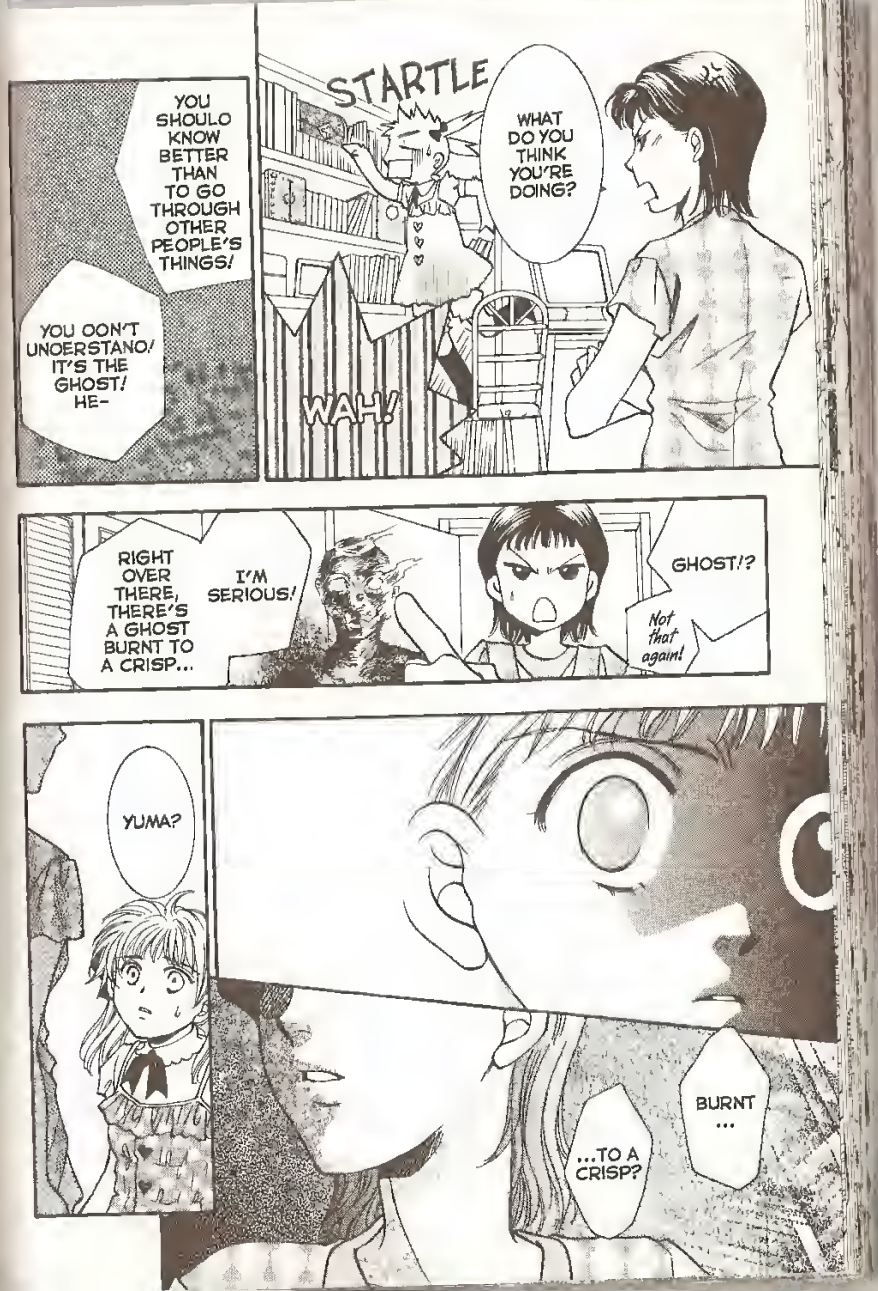

IS THERE SOMETHING INSIDE?
YOU WANT... THAT BOX?
What am I doing, talking to it?
UUUH ...
GUARDED

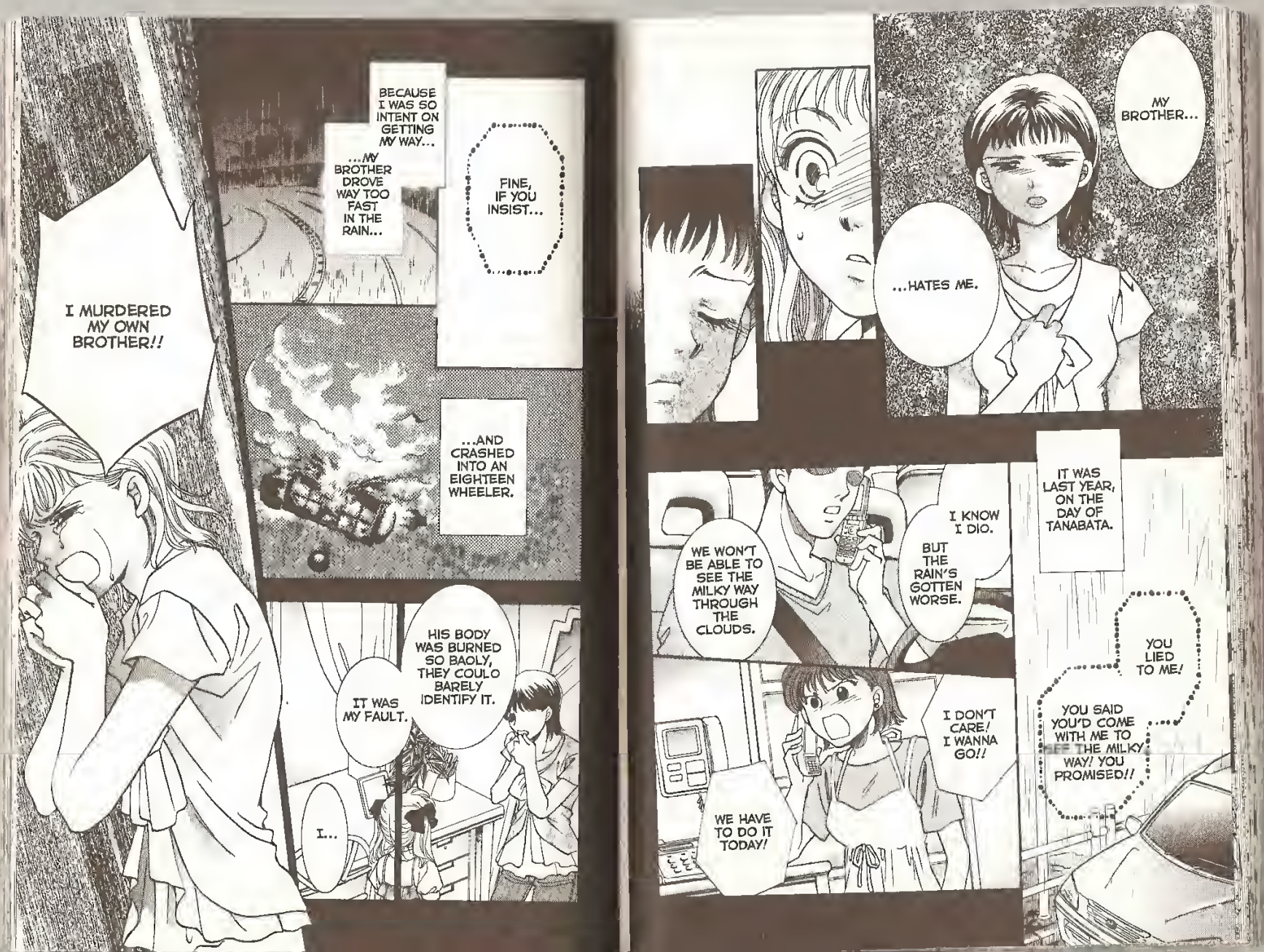
I'LL DO SOME-THING...
I WON'T LET YOU POSSESS AND KILL YUMA, YOU HEAR ME!?
I MEAN, I KNOW I'M NOT CAPABLE OF ANY-THING.
BUT I'LL PROTECT HER, JUST YOU WATCH!

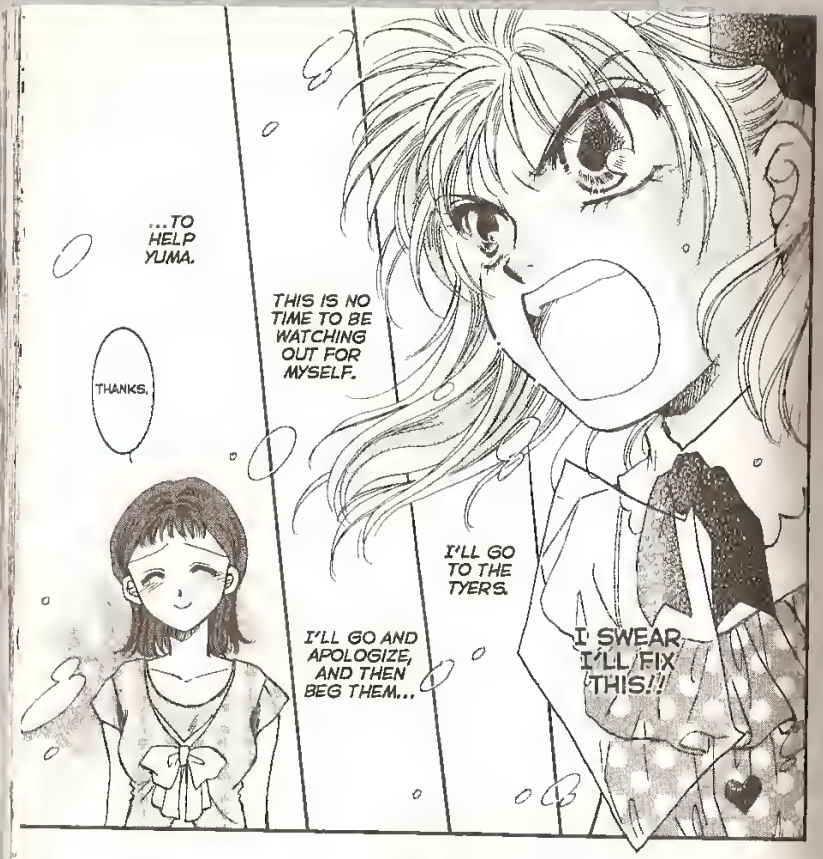
SO...
YOU SHOWED UP, YOU BURNT BLACK GHOST.


WOOOOOO
EEK!!

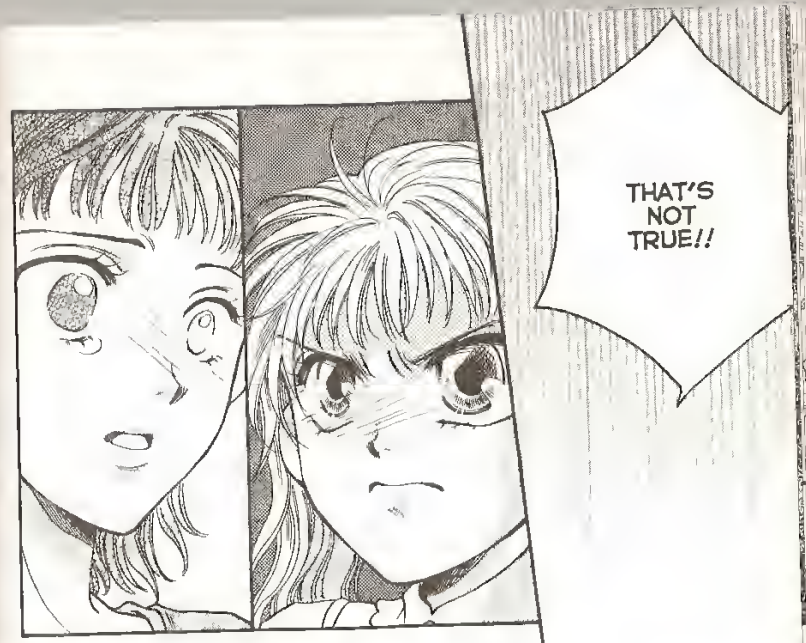
YUMA'S BROTHER...
...DIED IN A CAR ACCIDENT, LAST YEAR.
HUH!?
...MY BROTHER?
IS IT REALLY ...
HE FEELS TOO EVIL TO BE YOUR BROTHER.
UH... I DON'T THINK SO.
YUMA'S BROTHER WOULDN'T BE TRYING TO BURN THE CORD TO HER SOUL.
BROTHER ...?
IS THAT YOU?


YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO GO THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE'S THINGS!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IT'S THE GHOST! HE-
STARTLE
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
WAH!
RIGHT OVER THERE, THERE'S A GHOST BURNT TO A CRISP...
I'M SERIOUS!
GHOST!?
Not that again!
YUMA?
...TO A CRISP?
BURNT ...

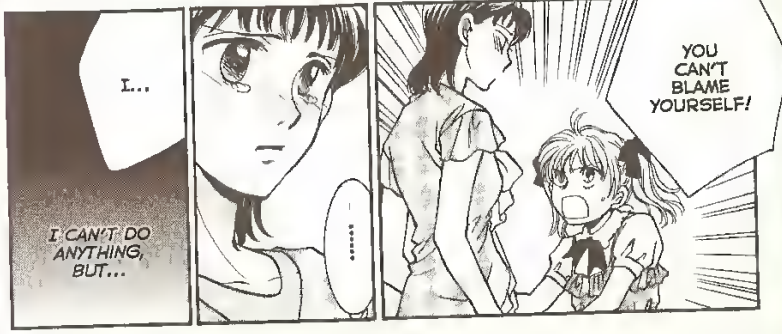

I MURDERED MY OWN BROTHER!!
BECAUSE I WAS SO INTENT ON GETTING MY WAY...
...MY BROTHER DROVE WAY TOO FAST IN THE RAIN...
FINE, IF YOU INSIST...
...AND CRASHED INTO AN EIGHTEEN WHEELER.
I...
IT WAS MY FAULT.
HIS BODY WAS BURNED SO BAOLY, THEY COULO BARELY IDENTIFY IT.
MY BROTHER...
...HATES ME.
IT WAS LAST YEAR, ON THE DAY OF TANABATA.
I KNOW I DIO.
BUT THE RAIN'S GOTTEN WORSE.
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE THE MILKY WAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS.
YOU LIED TO ME!
YOU SAID YOU'D COME WITH ME TO SEE THE MILKY WAY! YOU PROMISED!!
I DON'T CARE! I WANNA GO!!
WE HAVE TO DO IT TODAY!

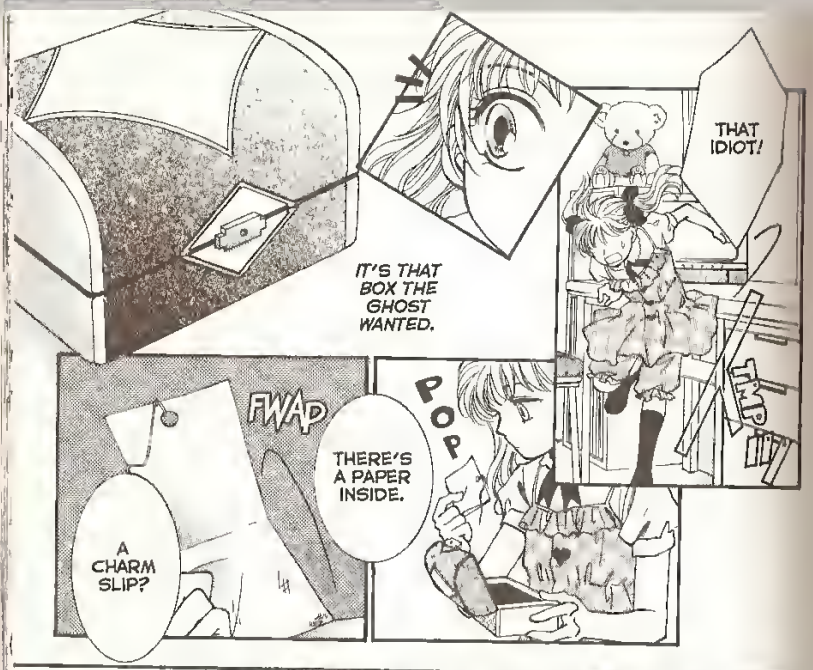

...TO HELP YUMA.
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE WATCHING OUT FOR MYSELF.
THANKS.
I'LL GO TO THE TYERS.
I'LL GO AND APOLOGIZE, AND THEN BEG THEM...
I SWEAR, I'LL FIX THIS!!

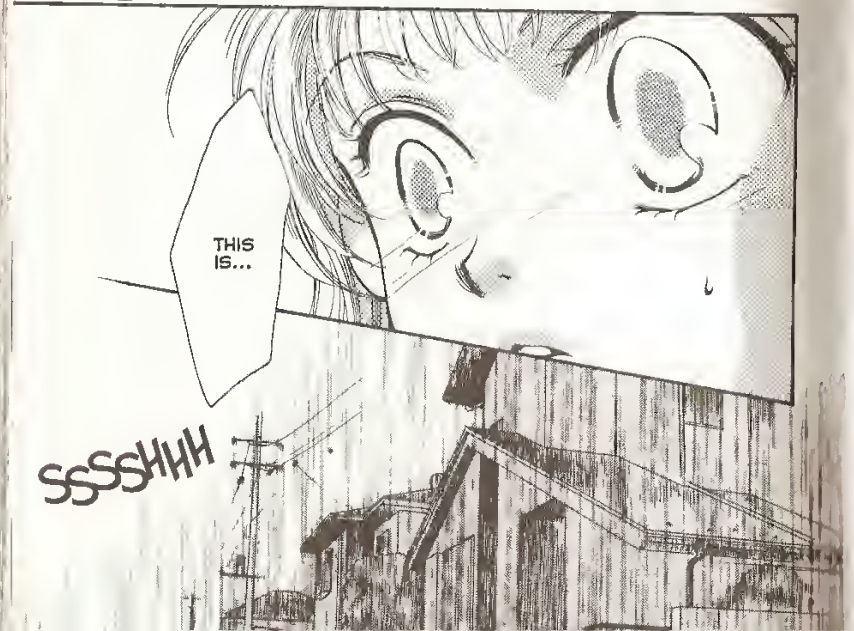
PLIP
PLIP
PLOP
SSSSHHH

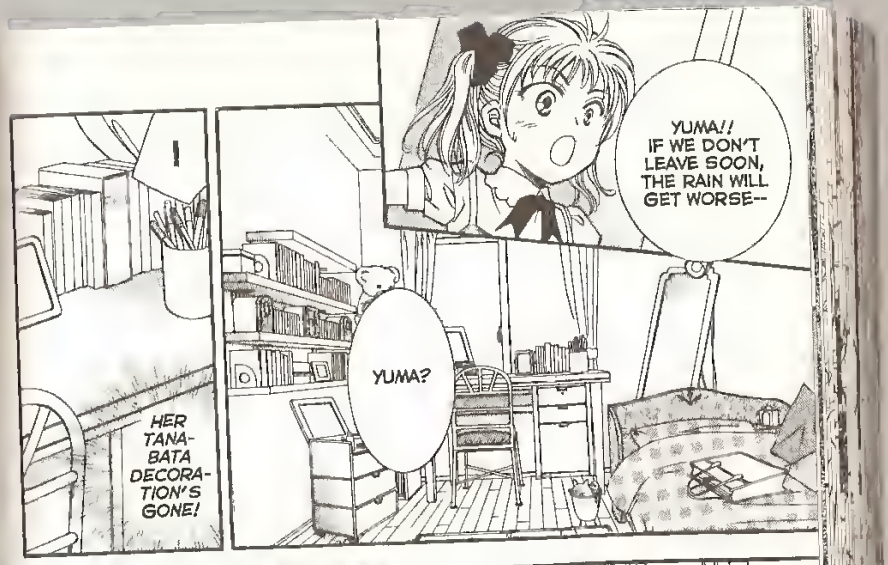

THAT'S NOT TRUE!!

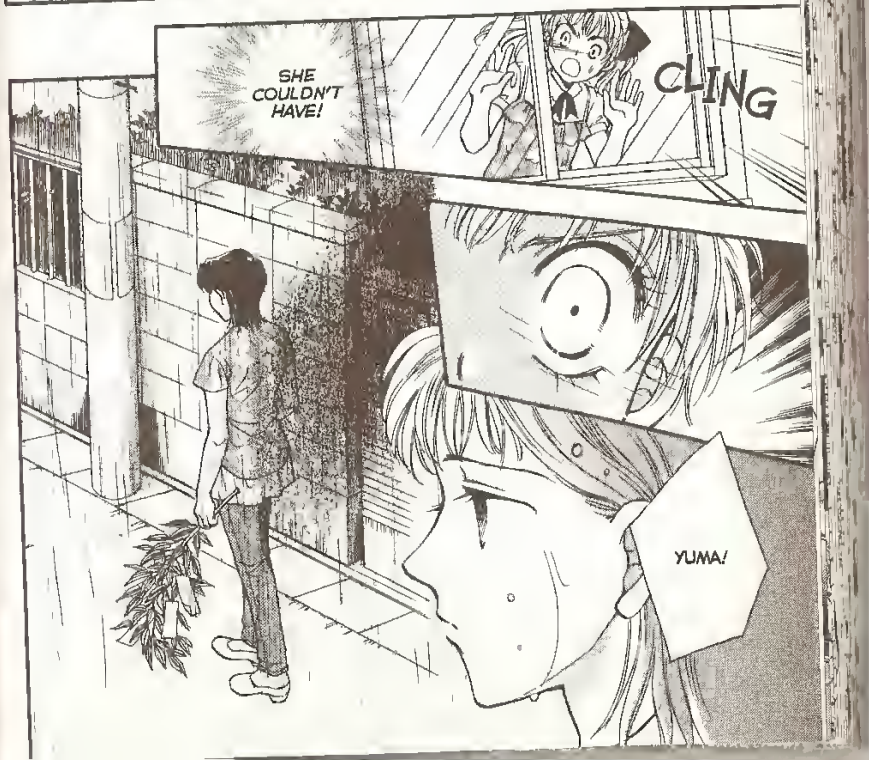
...HE MIGHT BE ATTACHED TO THIS WORLD FOR ANOTHER REASON.
ASSUMING THAT GHOST IS YOUR BROTHER...


I...
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING, BUT...
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF!


THAT IDIOT!
IT'S THAT BOX THE GHOST WANTED.
FWAP
THERE'S A PAPER INSIDE.
POP
A CHARM SLIP?


THIS IS...
SSSSHHH

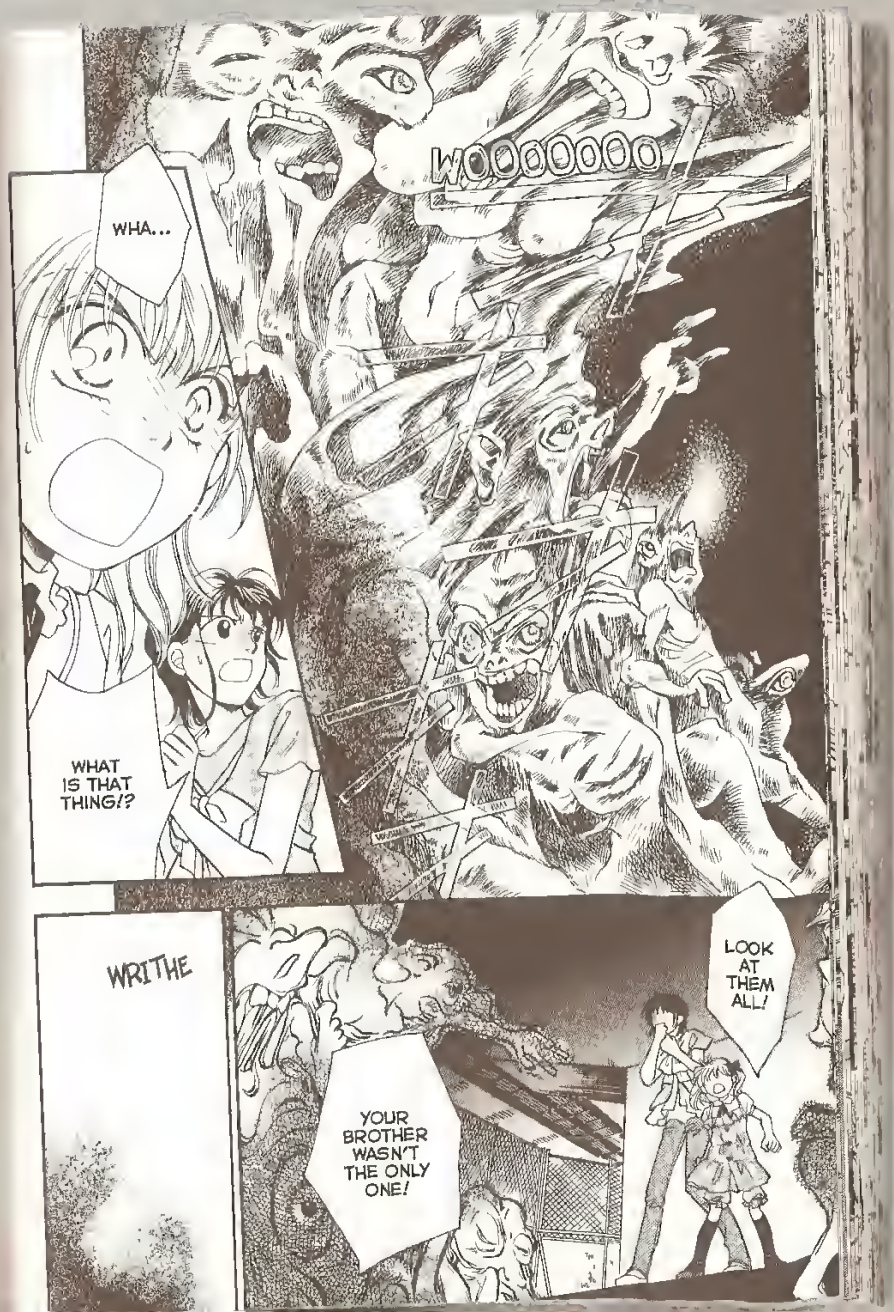

HER TANA-BATA DECORA-TION'S GONE!
YUMA?
YUMA!! IF WE DON'T LEAVE SOON, THE RAIN WILL GET WORSE--


SHE COULDN'T HAVE!
CLING
YUMA!

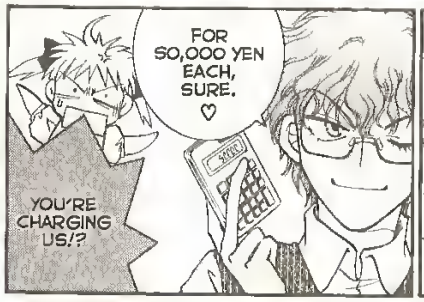
IT FEELS LIKE...
...SOMETHING INSATIABLE IS SQUIRMING ARDUND.
THERE'S...
WARNING
SCENE OF REPEATED ACCIDENTS
...REALLY NEGATIVE ENERGY HANGING ARDUND HERE!
!
YUMA!
HUFF
I...
...WAS IN LOVE WITH MY BROTHER.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
E... EVEN MY STAMINA'S ...
...BACK... TO A KID'S...
THIS IS...
...WHERE THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED.

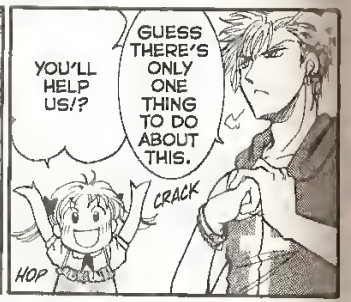
I want
to be m
brothe
wife
Second grade
Yuma Sanada
!
LOOK AT THIS!
YOU'RE WRONG, YUMA!
YOU WROTE THIS IN ELE-MENTARY SCHOOL.
AND YOU KEPT IT ALL THIS TIME, DIDN'T YOU?
THE GHOST OF YOUR BROTHER WAS TRYING TO GET TO IT!
LOOM
MAYBE YOUR BROTHER-
RIGHT!?
IF HE REALLY HATED YOU...
...HE WOULDN'T CARE ABOUT THIS!
IF MY BROTHER'S GHOST IS TRYING TO KILL ME...
...I DON'T CARE IF I DIE.
WE WERE ONLY SIBLINGS THROUGH OUR PARENTS' SECOND MARRIAGES.
WE WEREN'T RELATED BY BLOOD.
!
AFTER MY BROTHER STARTED TO LIVE ON HIS OWN...
...WE HARDLY EVER SAW EACH OTHER.
AND ON THIS DAY, LAST YEAR ...
...I'D VOWED TO TELL HIM HOW I FELT. ON THE NIGHT OF TANABATA.
I DIDN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT SEEING THE MILKY WAY.
I JUST WANTED TO SEE MY BROTHER.
I DON'T CARE IF HE HATES ME.
I MISS HIM SO MUCH.

VWIP
!!
WHOOSH
I SWEAR ...
YOU JUST GET YOURSELF INTO ONE MESS AFTER THE OTHER.

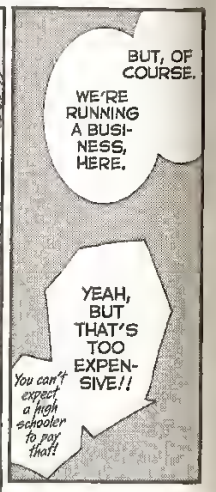

WOOOOOOO!
WHA...
WHAT IS THAT THING!?
WRITHE
LOOK AT THEM ALL!
YOUR BROTHER WASN'T THE ONLY ONE!

...OF SUICIDE VICTIMS' GHOSTS HERE.
THIS IS SOME GATHERING...


FOR 50,000 YEN EACH, SURE. ♡
YOU'RE CHARGING US!?


YOU'LL HELP US!?
GUESS THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO ABOUT THIS.
HOP
CRACK

WHAT!?
WELL, THEN ...
HOW ABOUT YOU PAY US BACK WITH YOUR BODY, CHIKO-CHAN?
Don't tell me you're into that kind of thing!!
That's a crime!


BUT, OF COURSE, WE'RE RUNNING A BUSINESS, HERE.
YEAH, BUT THAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE!!
You can't expect a high schooler to pay that!

MASTER!!

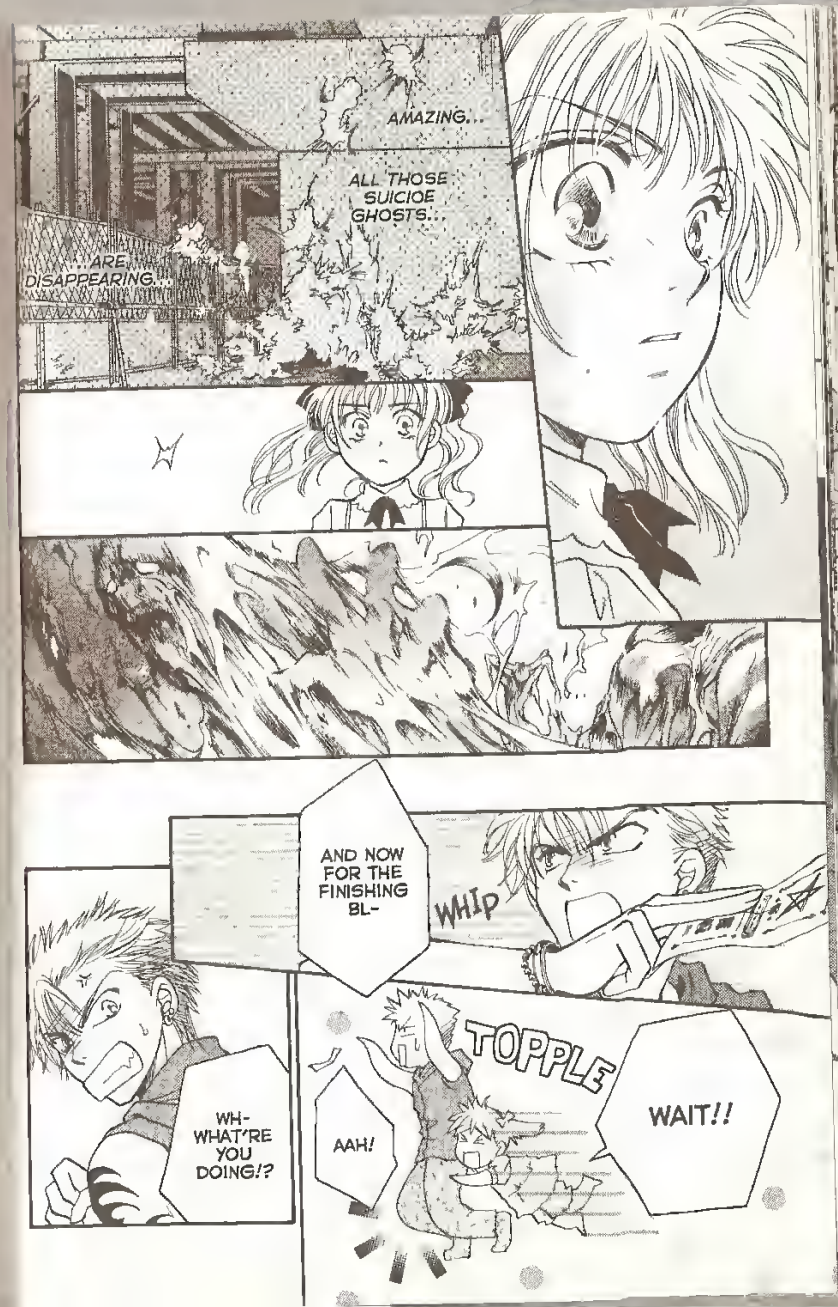
Gyaaaah!!
Of course, it's invisible.
I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, SO...
...IT'S A GOOD THING I TIED THIS TRACKING STRING TO YOU.

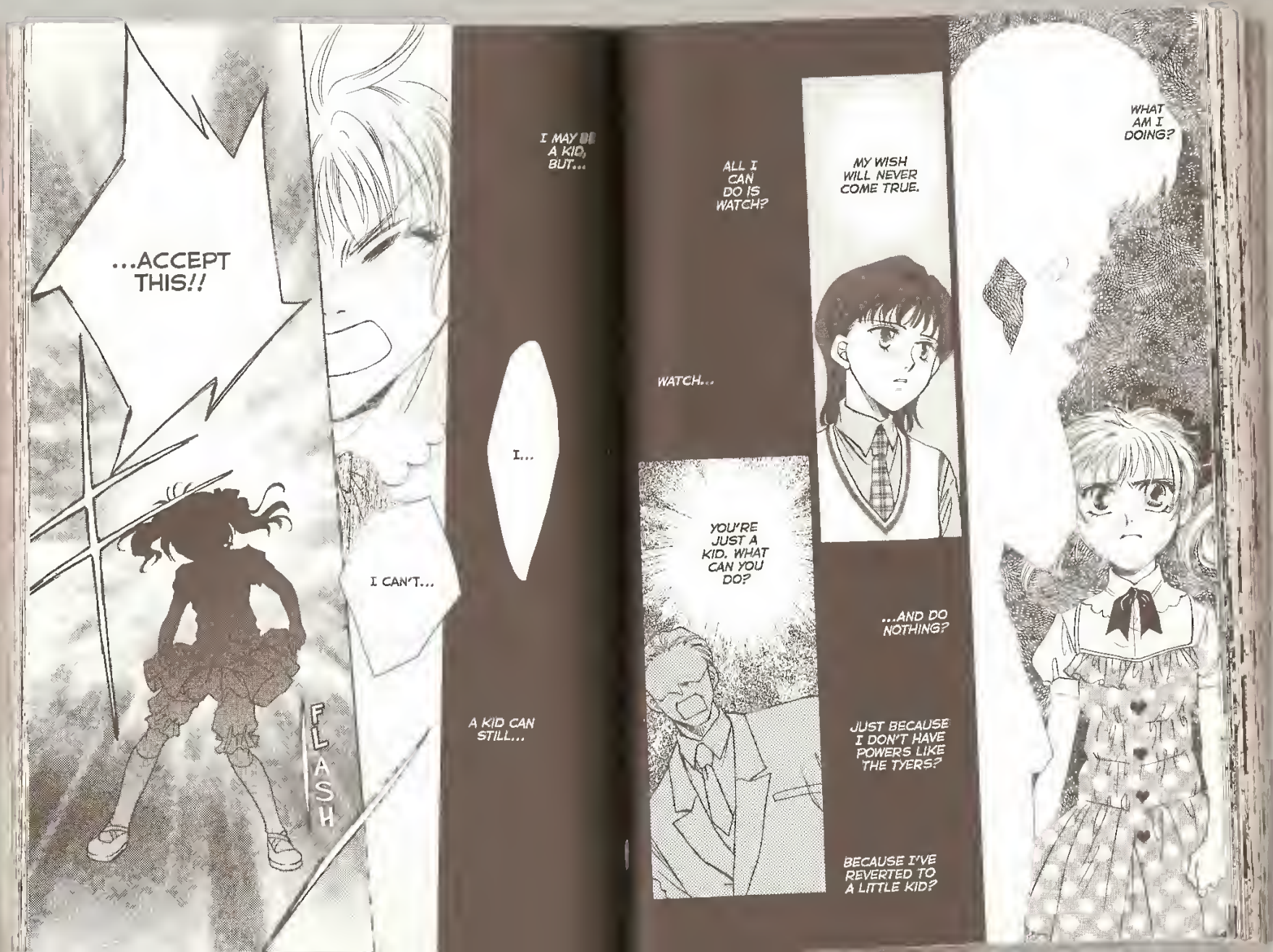
Remember my real name, dang it!
AND...
TATTOOS AND CHOKE DEMON!

WHIP
FLASH
ON...
...MYOJI?

YOU... YOU OGRE!!
MONSTER!!
...WE'LL HAVE YOU OBEY OUR ORDERS, IS ALL I'M SAYING.
I don't mind that line of taste, anyway.
UNTIL WE FIND A WAY TO LIQUIDATE YOUR PACT TO SHIRO-GANE...
Ow, ow, ow...
THIS IS JUST FOR YOUR INFOR-MATION, BUT...
...THE HIRING OF DEMON HUNTERS ...
... HARKS BACK TO THE HEIAN PERIOD.
FOR WE ARE...
...ONMYOJI.

...THAT CAN NO LONGER BE TIED BY THE STRING OF FATE THAT WOULD REEL THEM INTO THE AFTERLIFE, WHERE THEY BELONG.
A COMPLEX TANGLE OF LINGERING FEELINGS AND KARMA...
THEY'RE THE MANIFESTATION OF HATRED THAT'S BEEN BOUND TO THE EARTH FOR TOO LONG.
C... COME ON.
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE IN PAIN.
ALL WE CAN DO IS...
...SEVER THE STRINGS OF FATE THAT TIE THEM TO THIS WORLD.
BUT...!
WE TYERS CANNOT DO EVERYTHING.
YUMA...
AND MY BROTHER, TOO?
WHY DID HE HAVE TO DIE A PAINFUL DEATH...
...ONLY TO SUFFER AN EVEN MORE PAINFUL PASSING ON?


AMAZING..
ALL THOSE SUICIDE GHOSTS..
...ARE DISAPPEARING...
AND NOW FOR THE FINISHING BL-
WHIP
WH-WHAT'RE YOU DOING!?
TOPPLE
AAH!
WAIT!!


...ACCEPT THIS!!
I CAN'T...
FLASH
I MAY BE A KID, BUT...
I...
A KID CAN STILL...
ALL I CAN DO IS WATCH?
WATCH...
YOU'RE JUST A KID. WHAT CAN YOU DO?
MY WISH WILL NEVER COME TRUE.
...AND DO NOTHING?
JUST BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE POWERS LIKE THE TYERS?
BECAUSE I'VE REVERTED TO A LITTLE KID?
WHAT AM I DOING?

EEEEEK!!
WAIT, HOLD IT!!
CHIKO!?
I DID IT!!
POP
HUH?
OH!
I'M BACK TO NORMAL!!
FLAP
NOW I'LL NEVER HAVE A WHITE WEDDING!!
Your body's nothing to be ashamed of.
Aya-nii...
Ha ha ha!
THIS IS TOO MUCH!
OH, NOOOO!!

!
GLOOOW
WHAT...
CLINK
CLINK
SHE ...
SHE SPUN...
WHAT IS THIS?
...SHIRO GANE!

HUH!?
RUSH
HERE IT COMES.
Y... YOU MEAN THAT'S SHIRO-GANE!?
LOOK, IT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, BUT-!
OOF!!
SWAP
SWAP
I DON'T WANT T DIE.
EE...!!
PEEL
SHEESH, WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
A CHARM?
CALM YOUR HEART...
...TO CONTROL SHIROGANE.
THADUMP
MAS-TER!
Aaaah!!
We'll let her borrow this belt!
CALM DOWN.

THIS IS THE MALICE FELT BY THE SOULS OF THESE SUICIDE VICTIMS.
THEY EMBODIED THE WISHES THEY'D WRITTEN ON CHARMS, TO ACT AS INTER-MEDIARIES.
SUCH ARE THE STRINGS OF FATE CONNECTING THEM TO THIS PLANE.
FLASH
1
OUT OF THAT MESS!?
...POINT IT OUT.
IF YOU SEE A STRING OF FATE THAT SHOULD BE "TIED" ...
...IS WHAT BEING A TYER IS ALL ABOUT.
...KNOTTING ONLY THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE TIED...
FROM A MASS OF INDEFI-NITELY EXISTING STRINGS OF FATE ...
TYING PEOPLE'S FATE STRINGS IS NOT EASY!
THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TELLING YOU!
3

I'M SCARED
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE
IT HURT
EEE
AAA AAAAH!!
KRRUSH
KRRUSH
KRRUSH
I'M IN PAIN!!
AAAH!!
I HATE
I'LL KILL HIM!!

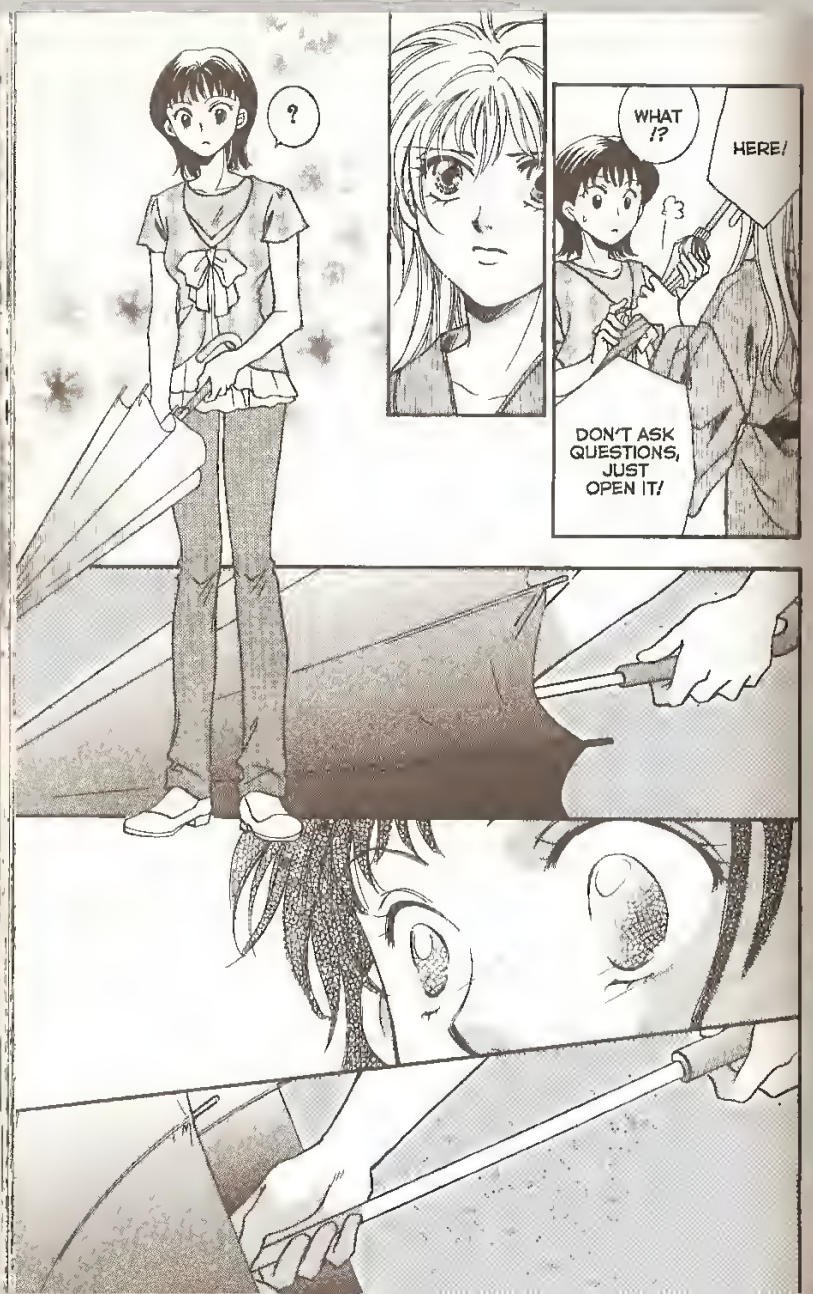
SHARPEN YOUR HEART'S SENSES.
LIFT
DON'T RUSH.
THADUMP
MAKE IT SO YOU CAN TRANSMIT THEM THROUGH THE THREAD.
YOU'LL BE FINE.

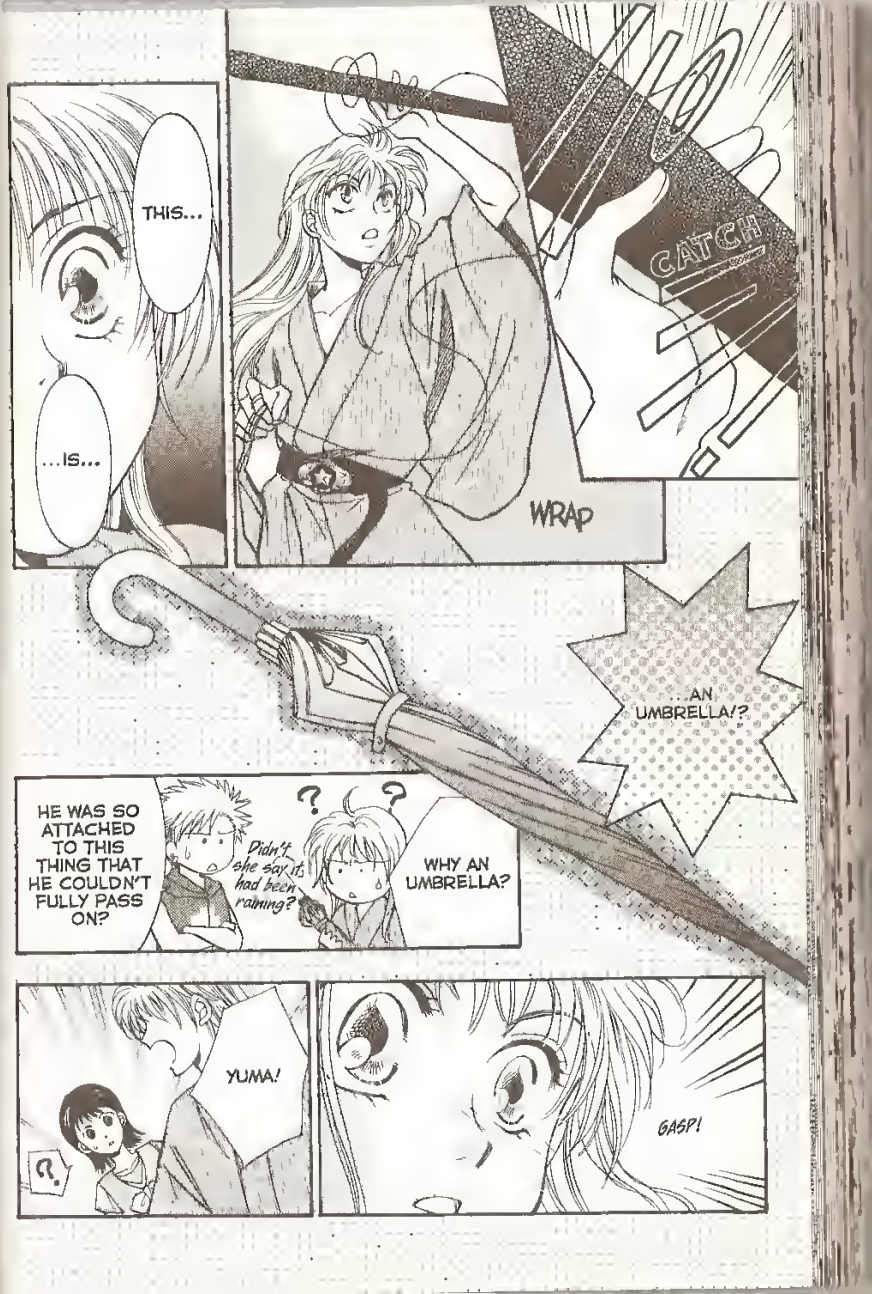
WITH A CHARM!?
IT CUT ME!?
WHIP
EEK!
!
IF YOU DON'T DO IT FAST, THEY'LL GET EVEN ROUGHER.
GULP
AMONG ALL OF THESE DIFFERENT STRINGS OF FATE...
...FINDING JUST ONE SPECIAL ONE IS ASKING TOO MUCH.
FEAR, ANGER, DESPAIR, SADNESS...
REGRET, JEALOUSY...
BESIDES...
EASY FOR THEM TO SAY.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE THIS SHIROGANE.

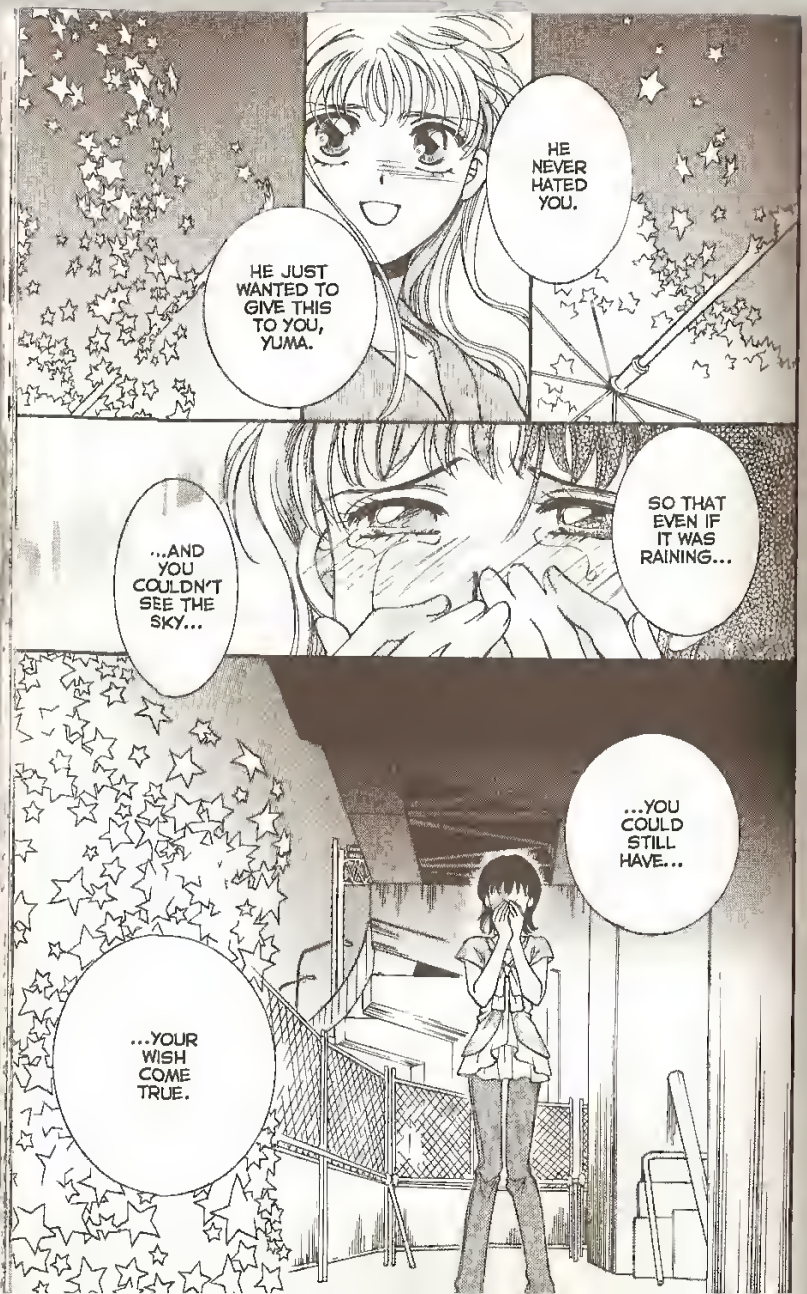
I UNDERSTAND NOW, MASTER.
THE MOST POWERFUL STRING OF FATE IN THIS WORLD IS THE ONE THAT IS CONNECTED TO PEOPLE'S WILLS.
IN THAT CASE ...
...YOU MEAN...
WRAP
TWIRL
...YOU WIN BY SHOWING JUST HOW MUCH WILLPOWER YOU'VE GOT!!

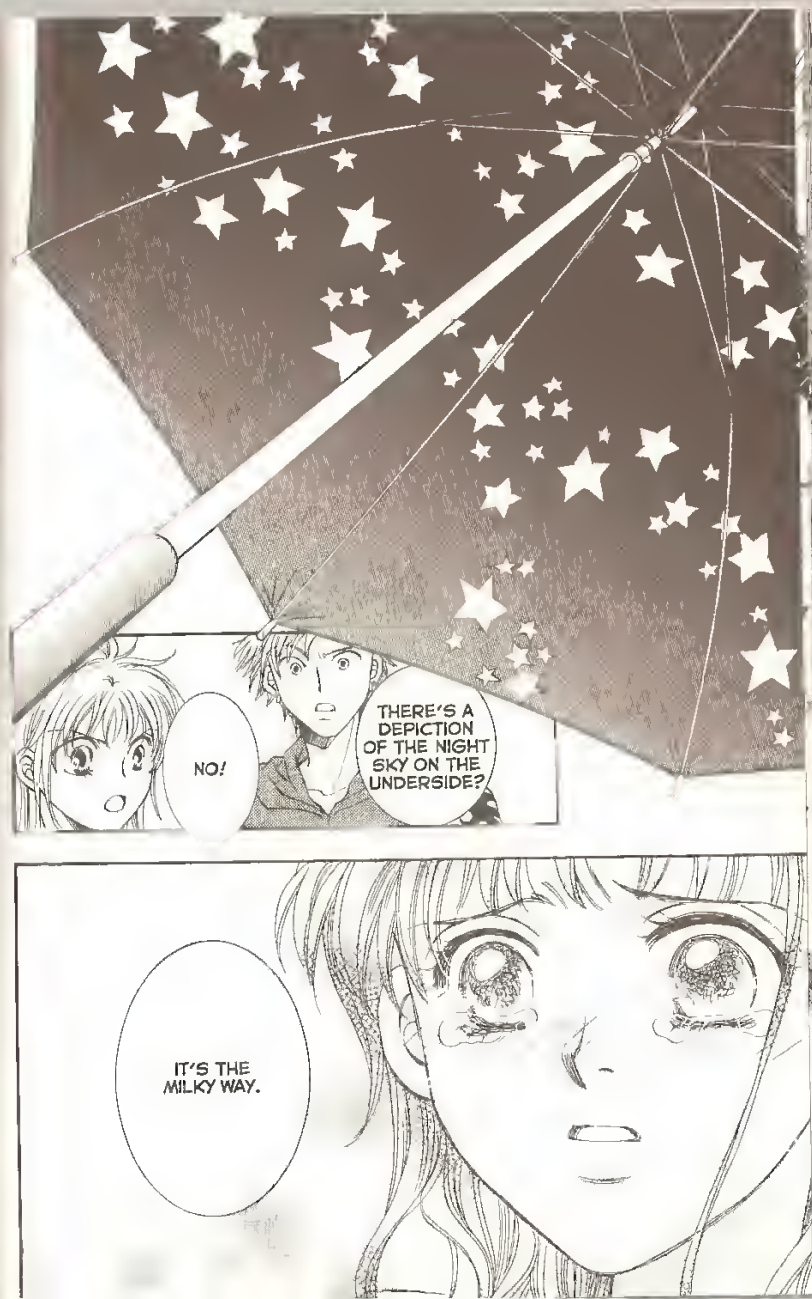
DON'T GIVE UP.
YOU'LL BE FINE.
TOUCH
AKEO...
...SAN!
SPLIT

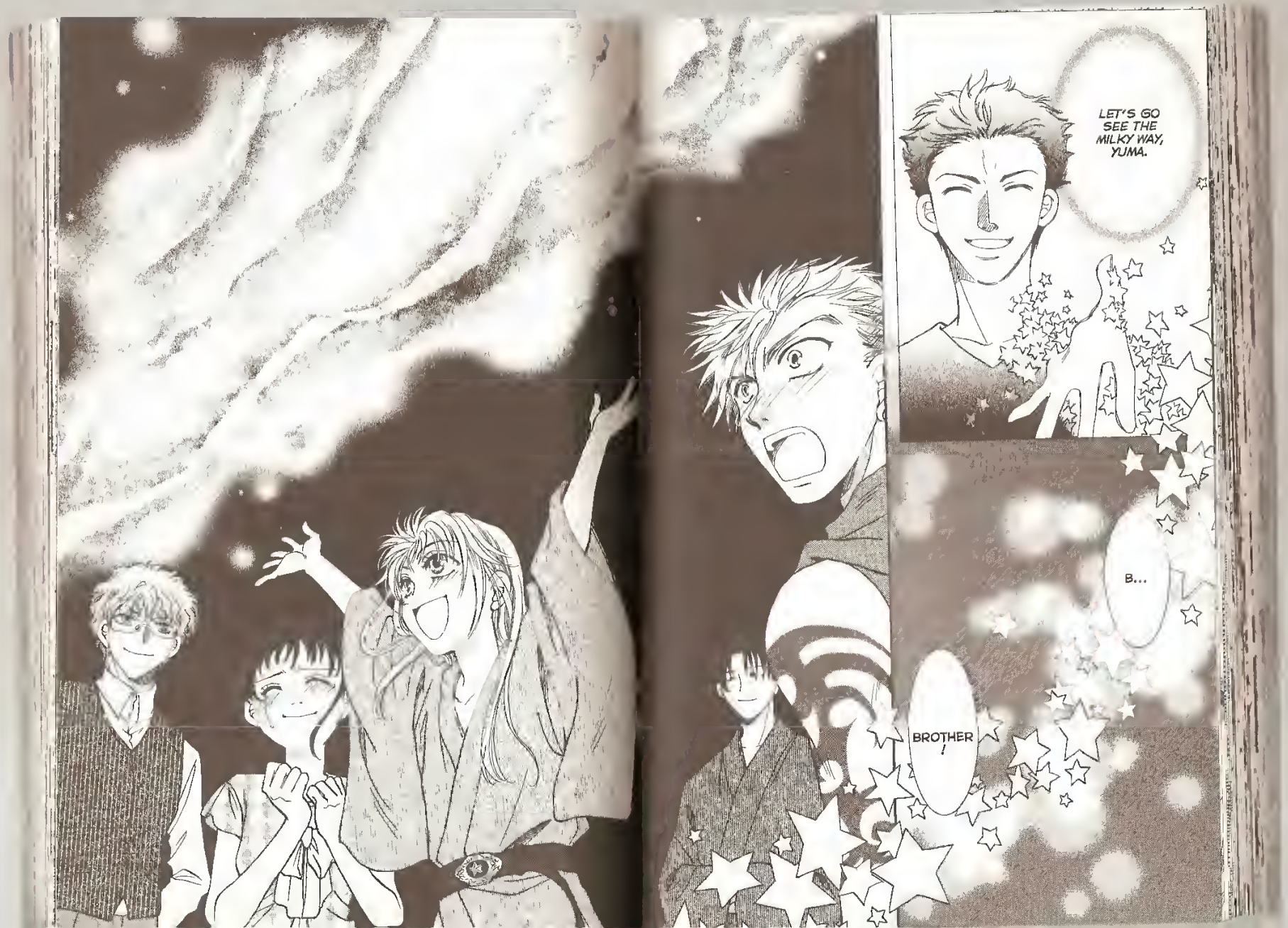
!!
SKREECH
THIS IS...
...THE MEMORY OF YUMA'S BROTHER!?
!
IT GOT AHOLD OF SOME-THING!?
WHAT?
HE'S LOOKING FOR SOME-THING?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
IF THERE'S A STRING OF FATE ...
...THAT YOU JUST CAN'T TIE, THEN...
RAVEL
...YOU SHOULD BIND IT!!


?
WHAT!?
HERE!
DON'T ASK QUESTIONS, JUST OPEN IT!


THIS...
...IS...
CATCH
WRAP
AN UMBRELLA!?
HE WAS SO ATTACHED TO THIS THING THAT HE COULDN'T FULLY PASS ON?
Didn't she say it had been raining?
WHY AN UMBRELLA?
YUMA!
?
GASP!

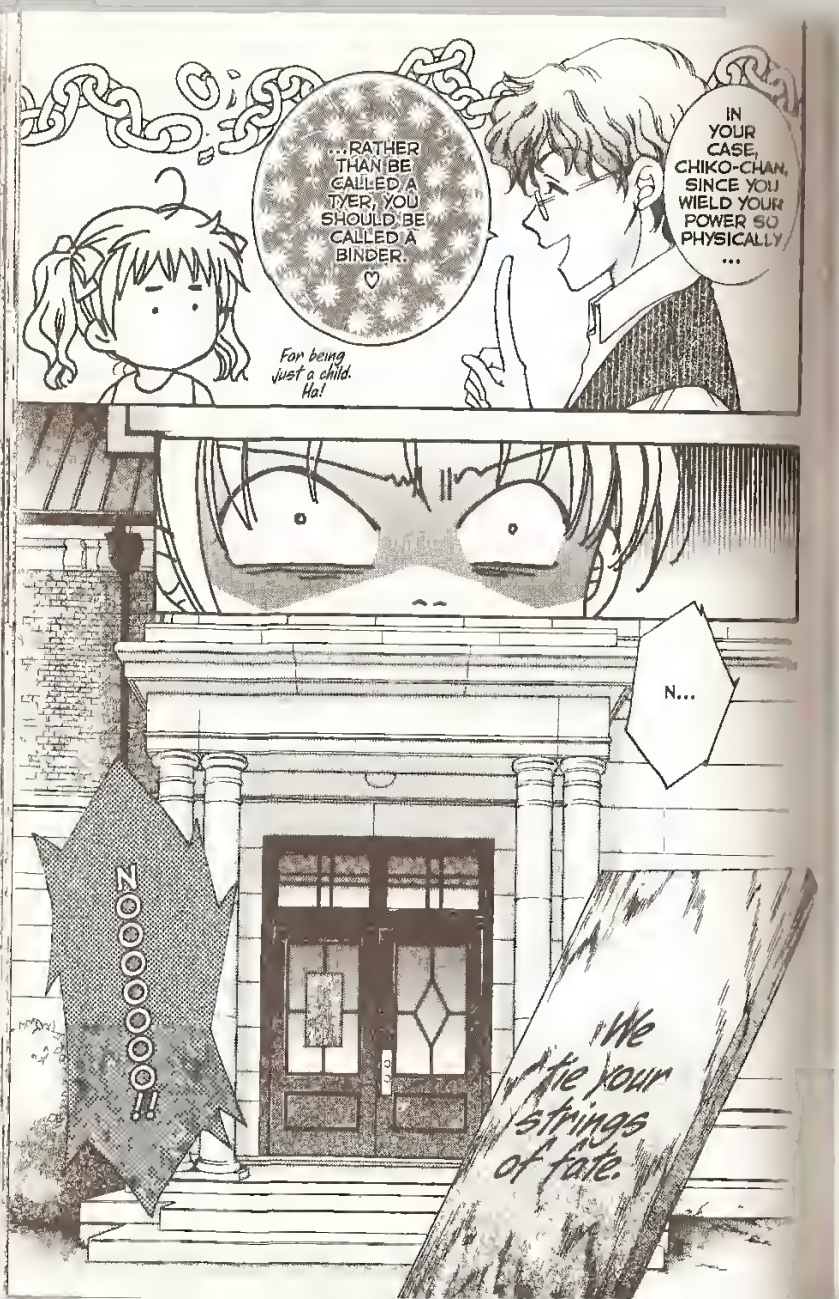

HE NEVER HATED YOU.
HE JUST WANTED TO GIVE THIS TO YOU, YUMA.
SO THAT EVEN IF IT WAS RAINING...
...AND YOU COULDN'T SEE THE SKY...
...YOU COULD STILL HAVE...
...YOUR WISH COME TRUE.


NO!
THERE'S A DEPICTION OF THE NIGHT SKY ON THE UNDERSIDE?
IT'S THE MILKY WAY.

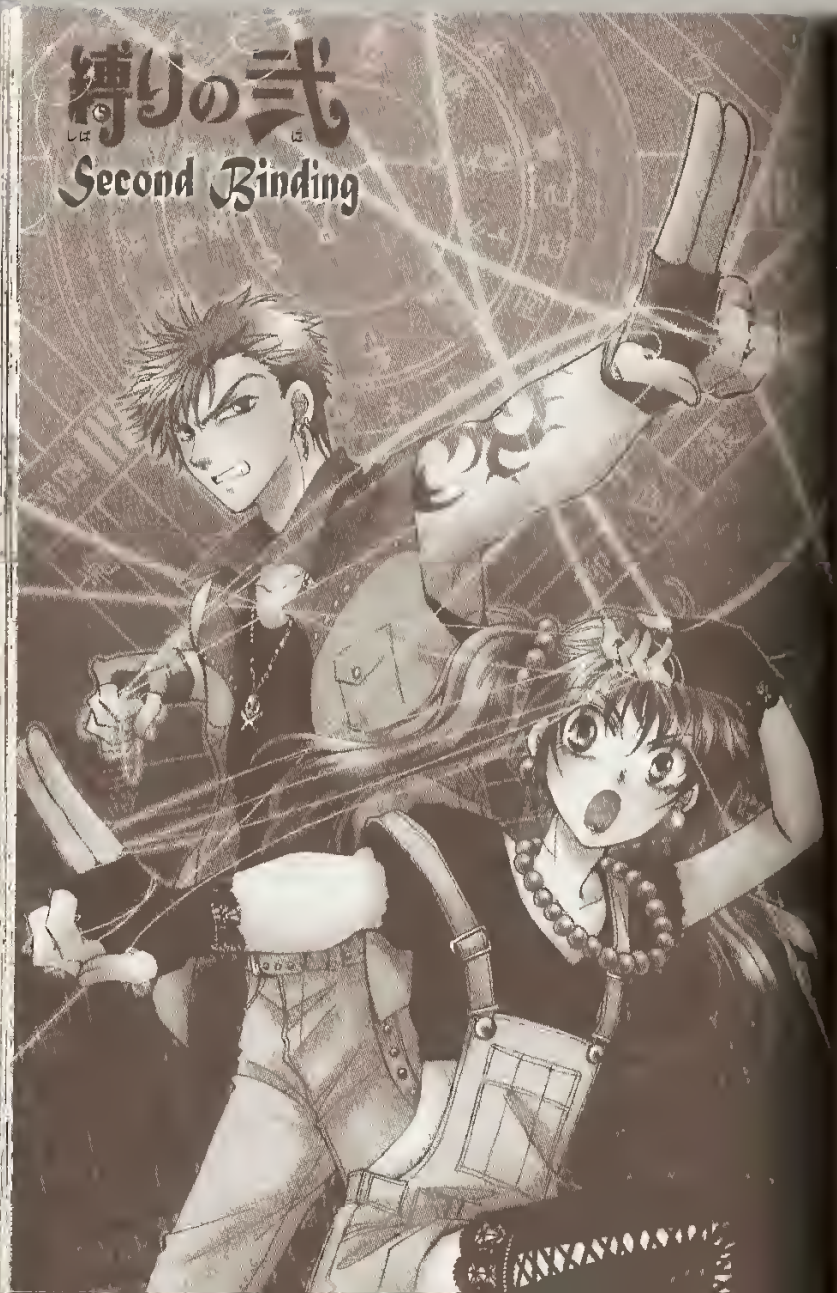

LET'S GO SEE THE MILKY WAY, YUMA.
B...
BROTHER!

IF THIS UNTRAINED NEWBIE CAN WIELD ONE OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS...
...THEN IT DEFINITELY MEANS THAT SHIROGANE CHOSE HER.
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT! I GIVE IN!
WAIT! HOLD IT, AYA-NII!
YOU RECOGNIZE THIS STUPID GIRL AS A SPINNER OF THE THREAD!?
THIS FAKE WHO WAS IMPERSONATING REAL MATCH-MAKING TYERS!?
She only pulled it off after freaking out and losing it!
RIGHT ?
CHIKO-CHAN. ♪
DON'T GIVE ME...
... THAT B.S.
IF SHE JUST WATCHES AND LEARNS, SHE CAN BECOME A GENUINE BONA FIDE TYER, DON'T YOU SEE?
.....
Hmm...
This makes things more interesting!
JAWDROP

BROTHER...
I LOVE YOU.


...RATHER THAN BE CALLED A TYER, YOU SHOULD BE CALLED A BINDER. ♡
IN YOUR CASE, CHIKO-CHAN, SINCE YOU WIELD YOUR POWER SO PHYSICALLY ...
For being just a child. Ha!
N...
NOOOOOOO!!
"We tie your strings of fate."

WHY DID I BECOME A KID, AGAIN!?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN ONLY GO BACK TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL FORM ...
... WHILE YOU INVOKE SHIRO-GANE.
SHOCK
And who keeps picking out these clothes!?
.....
It's not that easy.
Out with you!
Waah! Come on, Shirogane!!
OH! BUT, YOU KNOW...



OFF RECORDING #1

To those I'm meeting for the first time, and those I know very well from all of our times together, hello! This is Mick Takeuchi. Thank you very much for picking up "Bound Beauty".

Since my last work "Her Majesty's Dog" had started off as just a one-shot, this is my first work that has ever started clean off as a serialization! It's inspired in me a change of attitude! Though I'm still following through with the same old direction and same kind of title. Ha! People are really going to start thinking that I'm seriously into that kind of hobby or something.

This time, I really thought I'd come up with a title that I could call my representative work without hesitation or shyness. Though at first I was headed toward a pretty decent and upright title, it feels like I tried too hard to hit the nail on the head and, well... I ended up adopting what this note in the corner in my head kept saying about "Come on, this kind of title happens all the time. Tee hee!". When I wrote the name down, I made up my mind that I'd definitely use it and couldn't help the feeling that I was getting to go down that same path all over again... you know how it is.

So I started my piece, and discussed with my editor this, that, and the other thing, and some requests I got were to have it be a "fantasy piece with both modern and classic elements," and "have a male cast that wears traditional Japanese clothing." That led to a discussion about maybe having there be onmyoji. With that, I resurfaced some material I'd researched but that had gone unused in a previous work, and since Japanese folklore and beliefs regarding the body are fields of very great interest to me now, it was a well-timed rescue. And so I had my story's framework. The concept of the five colored threads is less of an onmyoji thing and more strongly associated with Buddhist beliefs. But hey, this is fiction so let's just ignore that, shall we? (ha)

I'm just going to put it out there when I say that this story shares the same world outlook as my last one did. (ha) So for those who have not yet read "Her Majesty's Dog" I gently coax you in that direction. (Go publicity!)

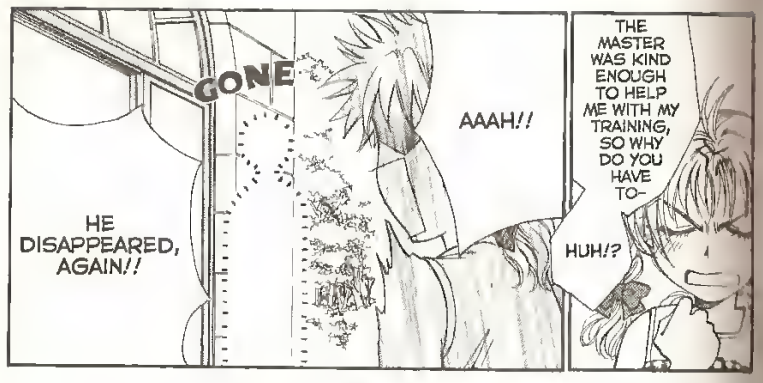
The moment I came up with "Bound Beauty" I got a little uneasy, so I went to my writer friend S for advice.
Hey! Hey! Do you really think this is an okay title to go with? I shouldn't worry, right?
Hmm?
sorry
Bound Beauty
I saw that face you made just now...
I don't see what's wrong with it.
Makes what feel good!?
At first people might be repulsed but once you get used to it, it feels pretty good.
Hm!

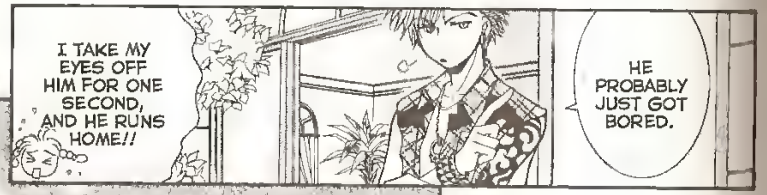
HOW CAN I!?
ARE YOU MAINTAIN-ING IT?
THADUMP
I'M CHIYAKO GOTO. AGE 17.
Hmmm
I'M JUST YOUR AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL, LIKE YOU'D FIND ANYWHERE.
BADUM
THAT'S RIGHT, A HIGH SCHOOL GIRL.
AND I AM 17 YEARS OLD.
Despite what you see!!
BADUMP

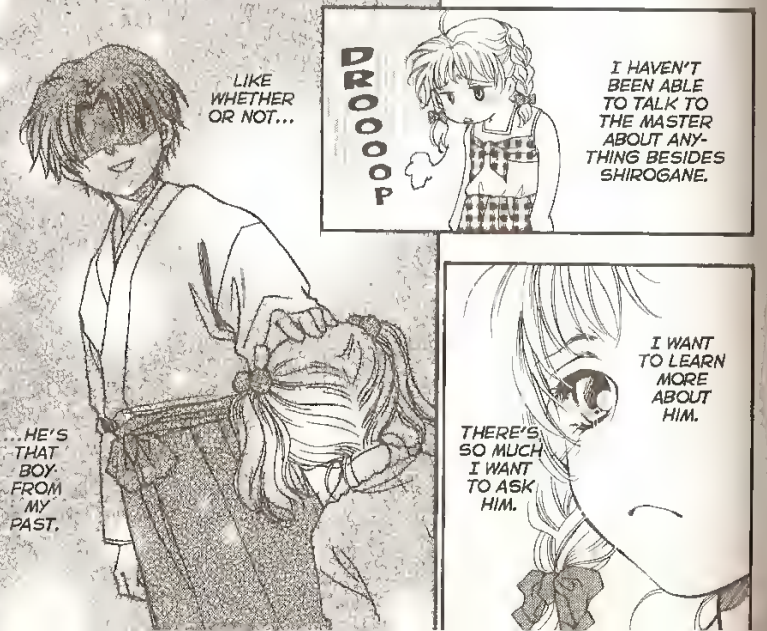
TAKE IT SLOWLY...
...AND TRY TO IMAGINE LIGHT GATHERING AT THE TIPS OF YOUR FINGERS.
AND THEN RELEASE THAT LIGHT IN ONE GO.
MAINTAIN YOUR FOCUS FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN.
ENTRANCED

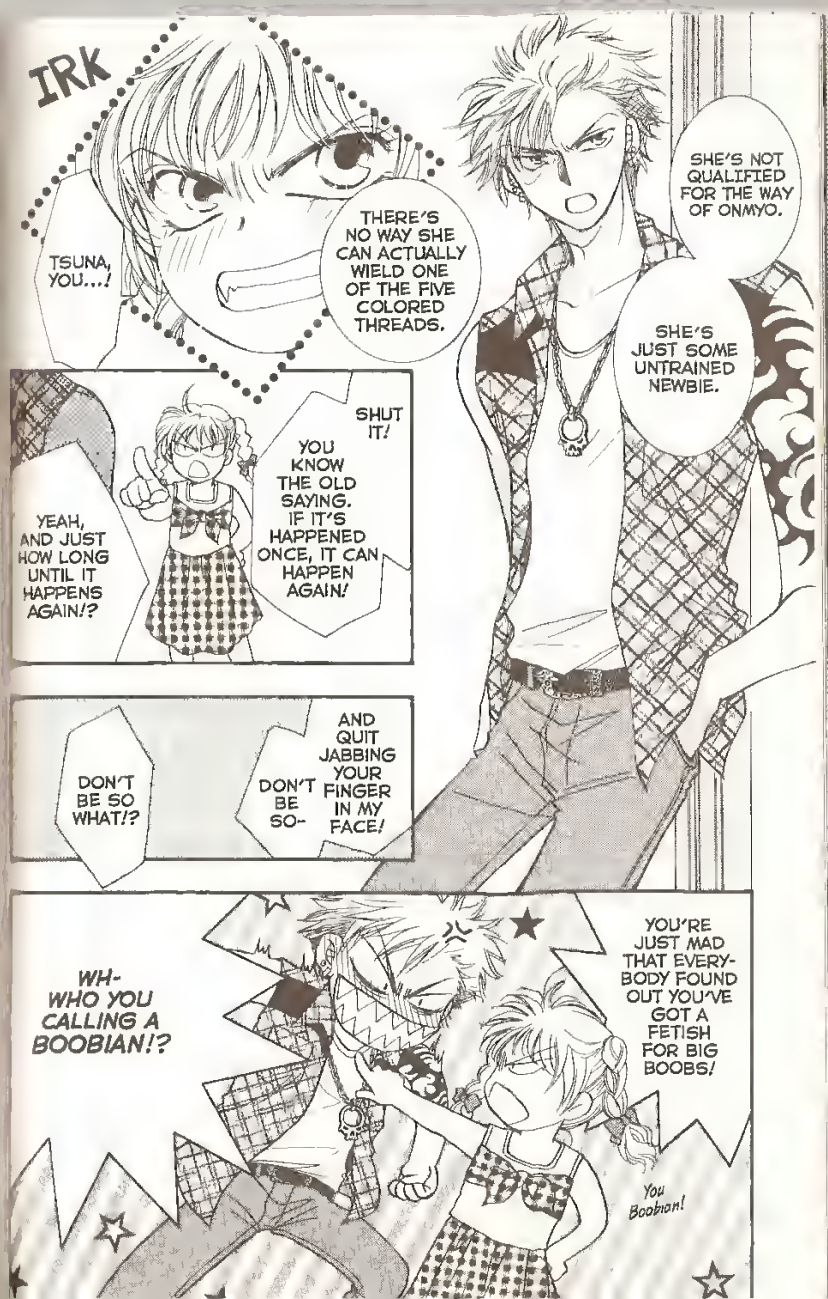
REACH
Hee.
WHAT SHE PULLED OFF THAT ONE TIME WAS JUST A "FLUKE"
STAB
I'M TELLIN' YOU...

AAAARRRGH!!
THIS ISN'T WORKIIIIING!!
AFTER THE INITIAL INCIDENT, I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SPIN SHIROGANE ONCE.
AFTER ACCIDENTALLY SEALING A PACT WITH SHIROGANE, ONE OF THE SACRED FIVE COLORED THREADS...
...MY BODY REVERTED TO ITS CHILD-FORM, AND IT'S BEEN LIKE THAT FOR A WEEK.
I don't get it...
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT "LIGHT GATHERING" EVEN LOOKS LIKE.
.....
I GUESS I'M NO GOOD AT TEACHING THIS...
WHAT DO I DO? I DON'T WANT TO BE A BURDEN TO THE MASTER.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, MASTER!
I'M JUST A SLOW LEARNER!
FRET
FRET
WHAT!? NO, NOT AT ALL!!


GONE
AAAH!!
HE DISAPPEARED, AGAIN!!
THE MASTER WAS KIND ENOUGH TO HELP ME WITH MY TRAINING, SO WHY DO YOU HAVE TO-
HUH!?


I TAKE MY EYES OFF HIM FOR ONE SECOND, AND HE RUNS HOME!!
HE PROBABLY JUST GOT BORED.

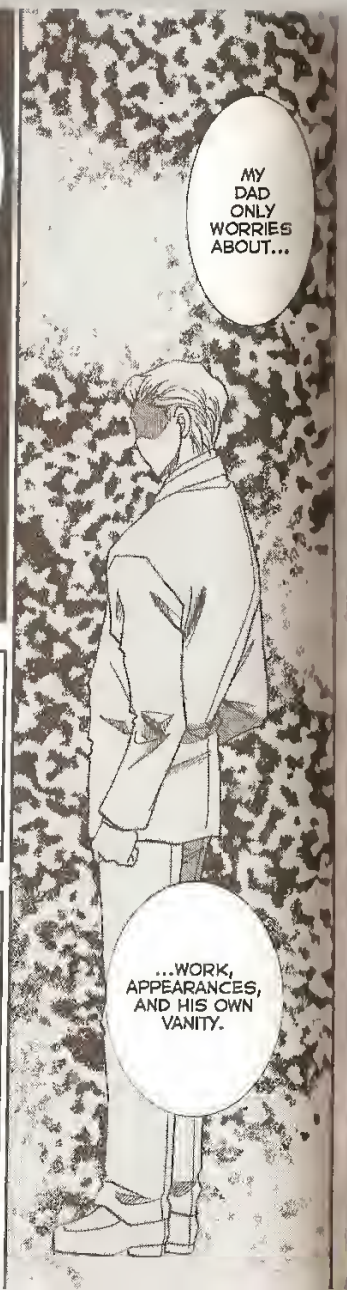

LIKE WHETHER OR NOT...
...HE'S THAT BOY FROM MY PAST.
DROOOOP
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO THE MASTER ABOUT ANY-THING BESIDES SHIROGANE.
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO ASK HIM.
I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM.


IRK
TSUNA, YOU...!
THERE'S NO WAY SHE CAN ACTUALLY WIELD ONE OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS.
SHE'S NOT QUALIFIED FOR THE WAY OF ONMYO.
SHE'S JUST SOME UNTRAINED NEWBIE.
YEAH, AND JUST HOW LONG UNTIL IT HAPPENS AGAIN!?
YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING. IF IT'S HAPPENED ONCE, IT CAN HAPPEN AGAIN!
SHUT IT!
DON'T BE SO WHAT!?
DON'T BE SO-
AND QUIT JABBING YOUR FINGER IN MY FACE!
WH- WHO YOU CALLING A BOOBIAN!?
YOU'RE JUST MAD THAT EVERY-BODY FOUND OUT YOU'VE GOT A FETISH FOR BIG BOOBS!
You Boobian!

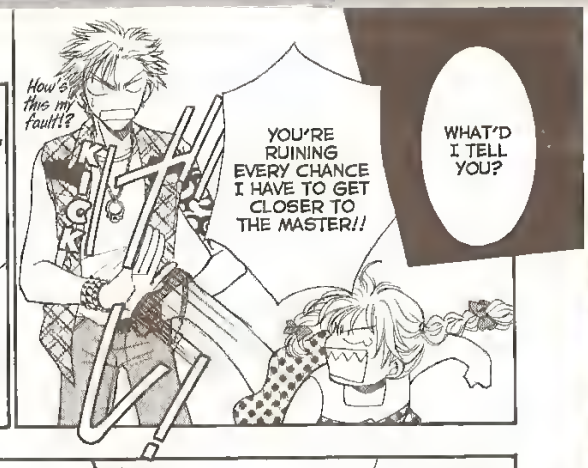
IT'S NOT LIKE HE'D BELIEVE ME, IF I SAID WHO I WAS.
AND EVEN IF HE DID...
...HE'D PROBABLY JUST SHUT ME UP IN THE HOUSE, TOO ASHAMED TO LET ANY-ONE SEE ME.

I'LL NEVER BE BOUND BY ADULTS AND THEIR STUPID LOGIC, EVER AGAIN!

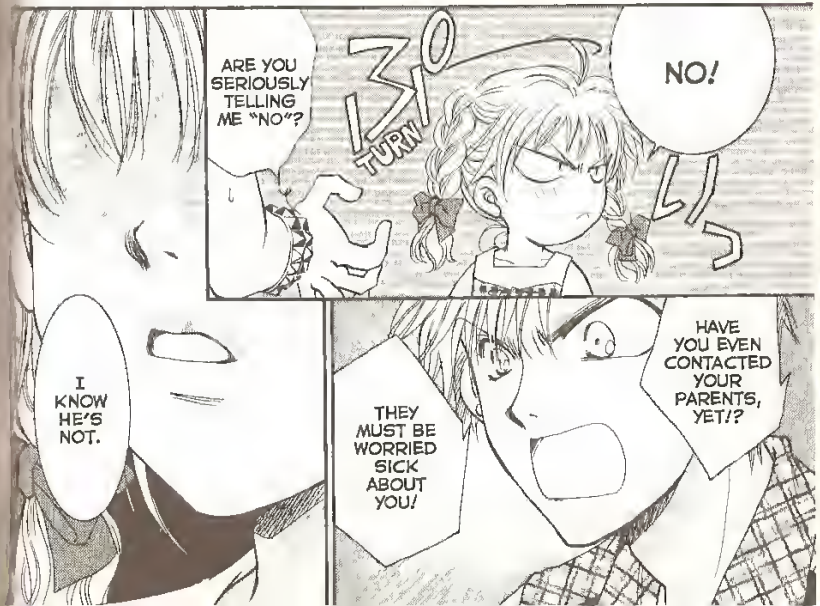
THIS SITUATION WORKS OUT BETTER FOR ME IN THE END.
THAT'S WHY I WAS A MATCH-MAKER.
I WANTED TO BE FREE OF HIM ANY-WAY.

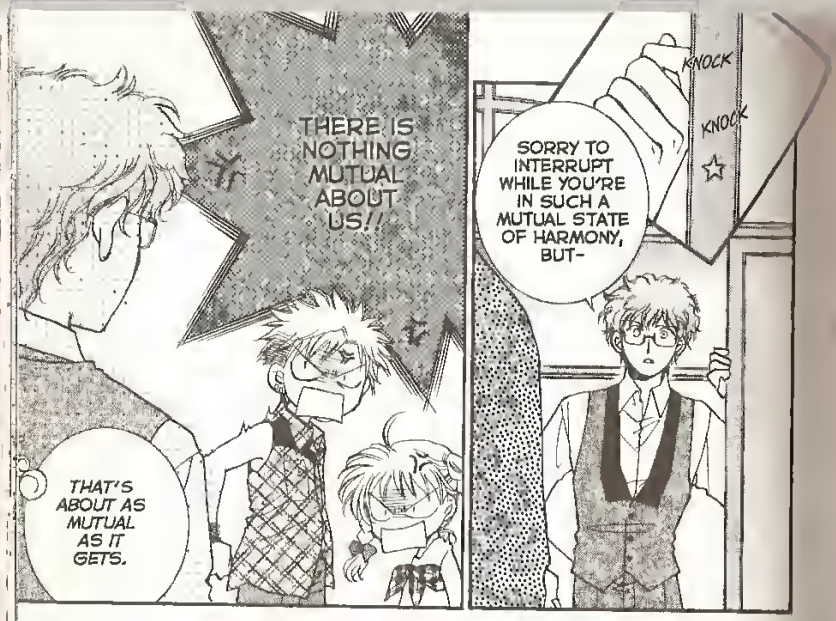

MY DAD ONLY WORRIES ABOUT...
...WORK, APPEARANCES, AND HIS OWN VANITY.

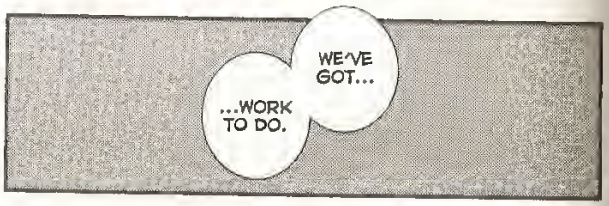
LISTEN, YOU ...!
AREN'T THERE OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD BE WORRYING ABOUT, RIGHT NOW!?

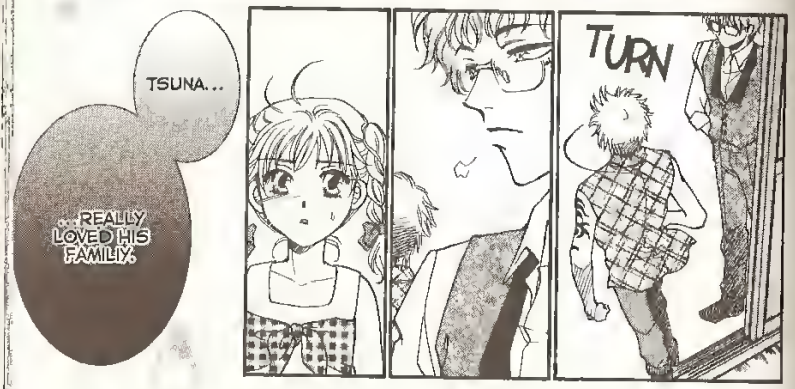

How's this my fault!?
YOU'RE RUINING EVERY CHANCE I HAVE TO GET CLOSER TO THE MASTER!!
WHAT'D I TELL YOU?

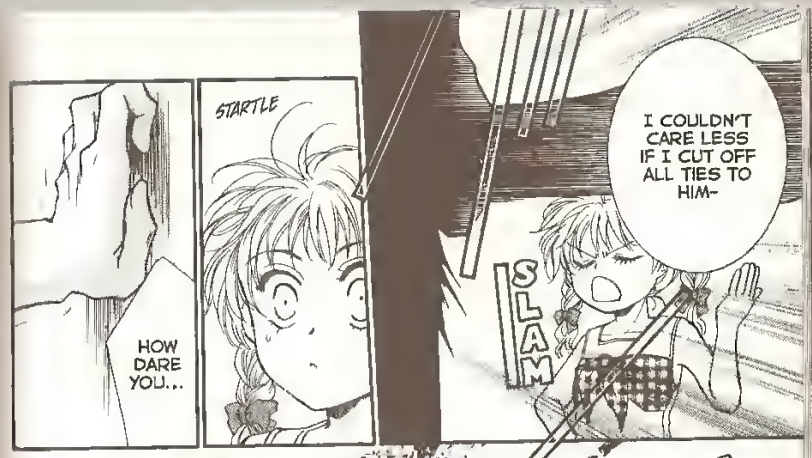
GO HOME, ALREADY! SHOO!
YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPING HERE LIKE IT'S YOUR HOUSE!
TAKE SCHOOL, FOR IN-STANCE!
LIKE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO NOW THAT YOU'VE BECOME A KID!


ARE YOU SERIOUSLY TELLING ME "NO"?
NO!
I KNOW HE'S NOT.
THEY MUST BE WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU!
HAVE YOU EVEN CONTACTED YOUR PARENTS, YET!?

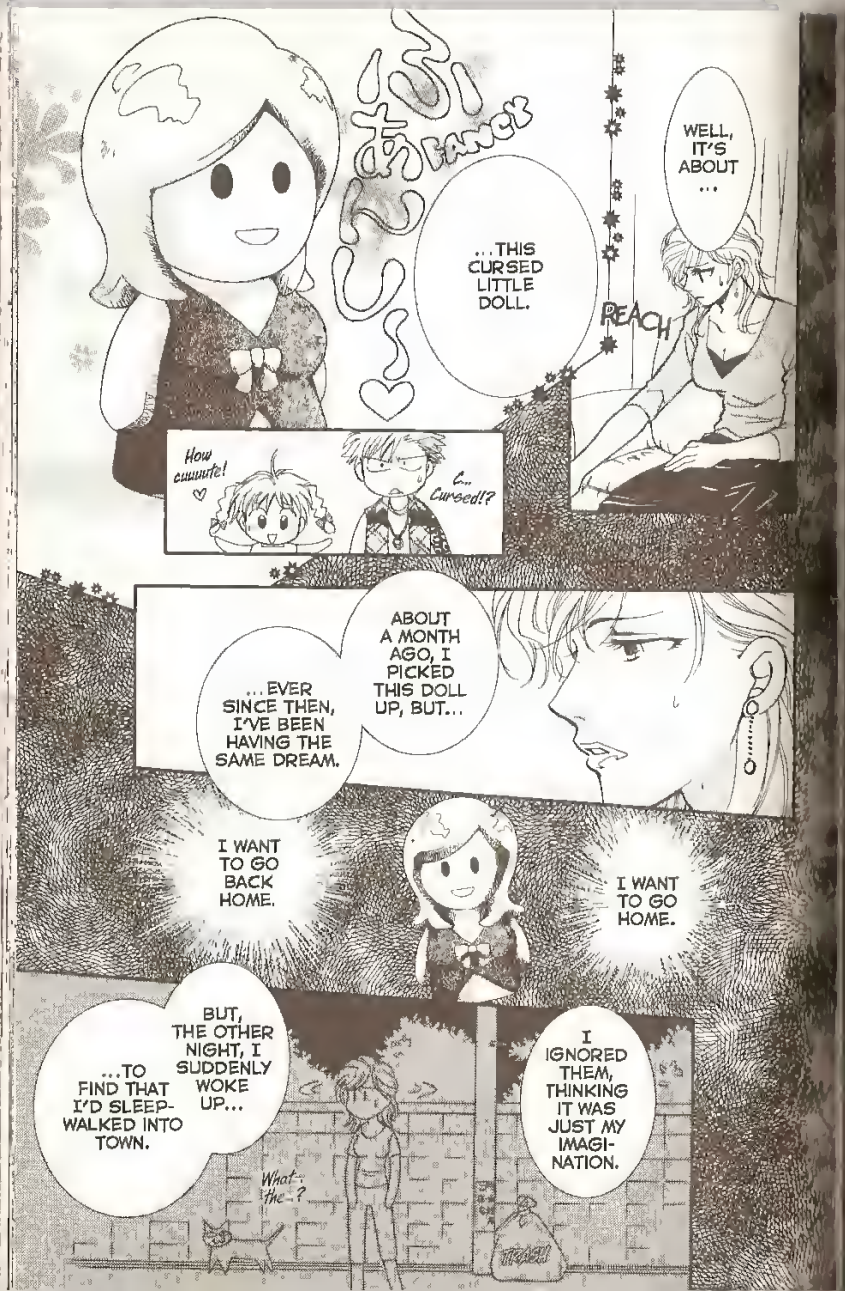

THERE IS NOTHING MUTUAL ABOUT US!!
KNOCK
KNOCK
SORRY TO INTERRUPT WHILE YOU'RE IN SUCH A MUTUAL STATE OF HARMONY, BUT-
THAT'S ABOUT AS MUTUAL AS IT GETS.

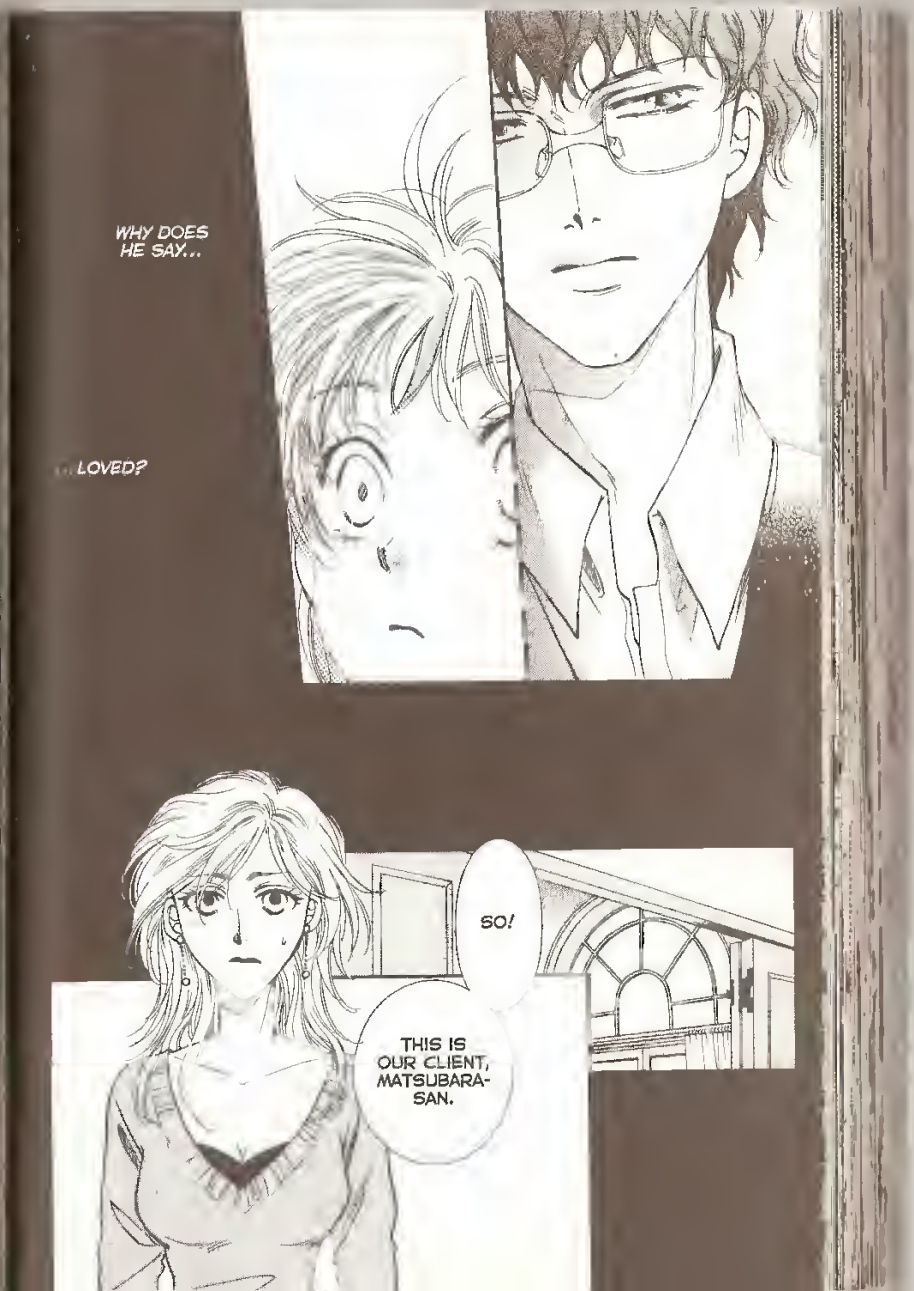

WE'VE GOT...
...WORK TO DO.


TSUNA...
...REALLY LOVED HIS FAMILY.
TURN

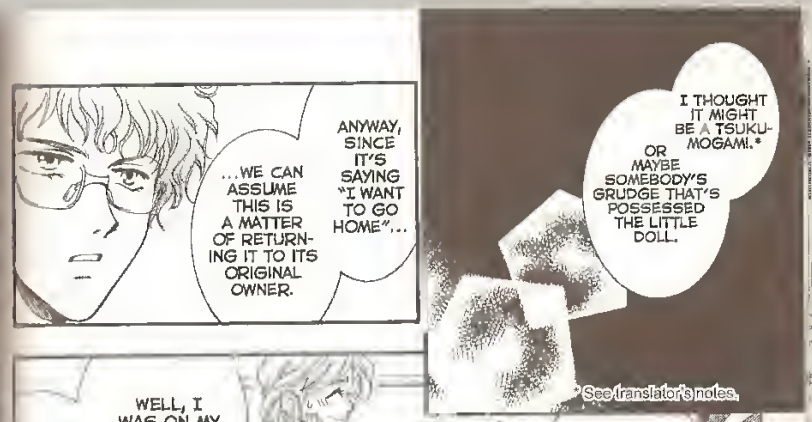

HOW DARE YOU...
STARTLE
I COULDN'T CARE LESS IF I CUT OFF ALL TIES TO HIM-
SLAM

THERE ARE SOME TIES...
...THAT CAN'T COME BACK ONCE THEY'VE BEEN CUT!!


WELL, IT'S ABOUT ...
...THIS CURSED LITTLE DOLL.
PEACH
How cuuuute!
C... Cursed!?
ABOUT A MONTH AGO, I PICKED THIS DOLL UP, BUT...
...EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN HAVING THE SAME DREAM.
I WANT TO GO BACK HOME.
I WANT TO GO HOME.
BUT, THE OTHER NIGHT, I SUDDENLY WOKE UP...
...TO FIND THAT I'D SLEEP-WALKED INTO TOWN.
I IGNORED THEM, THINKING IT WAS JUST MY IMAGI-NATION.
What... the...?


WHY DOES HE SAY...
...LOVED?
SO!
THIS IS OUR CLIENT, MATSUBARA-SAN.

LEAVE THIS TO ME!
I PROMISE YOU, WE'LL GET THIS LITTLE LADY BACK HOME!
BRING CHIYAKO WITH YOU, TOO.
HUH?
Y... YOU'RE KIDDING ME!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? NOT SURE YOU CAN DO IT?
I HAVEN'T ACCEPTED HER AS A MEMBER OF OUR GROUP, YET!
IT'S NOT A DANGEROUS ASSIGNMENT.
AND IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR HER TO SEE FIRSTHAND WHAT THE JOB OF A TYER IS ALL ABOUT.
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT!!
OOOOH, SO BECAUSE OUR CLIENT'S GOT A GREAT RACK, YOU'RE ALL ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE CASE, HUUUUUH?
I swear. Men...

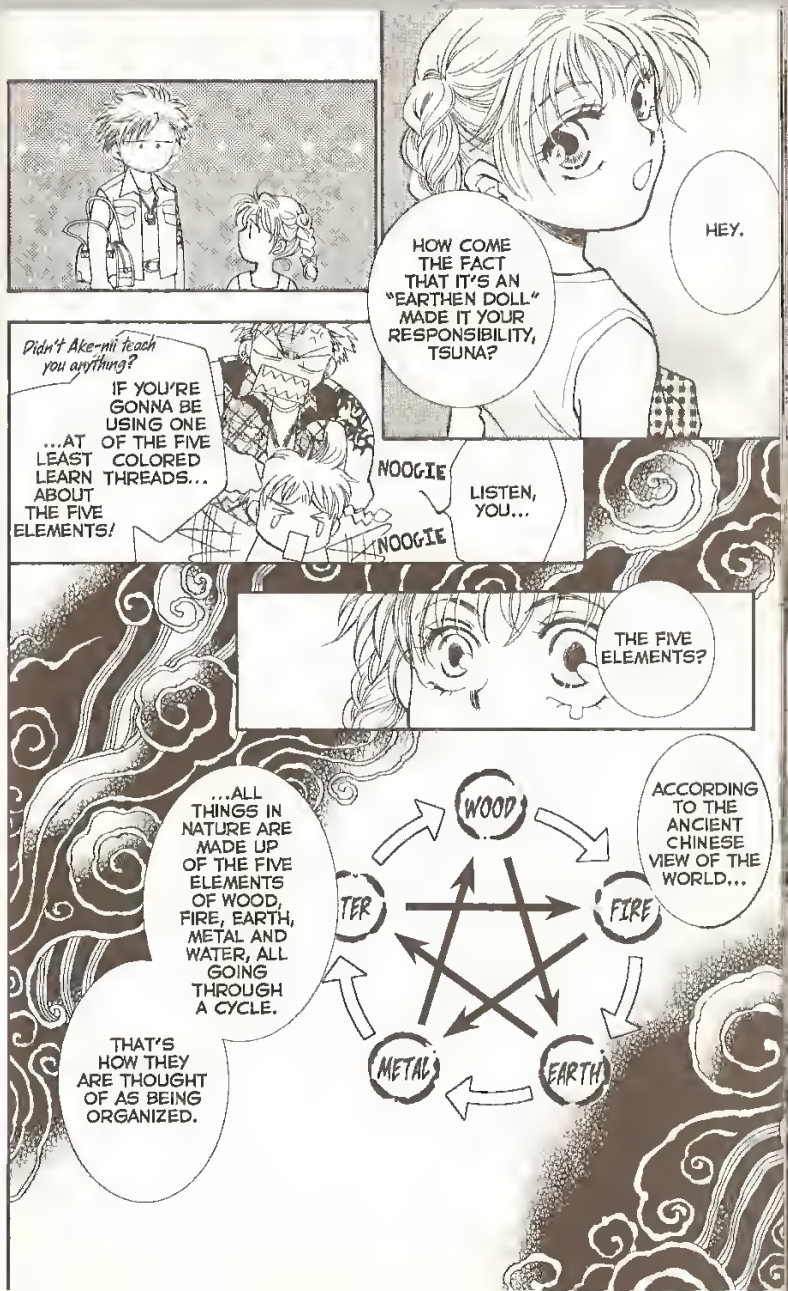

ANYWAY, SINCE IT'S SAYING "I WANT TO GO HOME"...
...WE CAN ASSUME THIS IS A MATTER OF RETURNING IT TO ITS ORIGINAL OWNER.
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A TSUKUMOGAMI.* OR MAYBE SOMEBODY'S GRUDGE THAT'S POSSESSED THE LITTLE DOLL.
* See translator's notes.
WHY DID YOU PICK UP THE DOLL IN THE FIRST PLACE?
Heh heh!
WELL, I WAS ON MY WAY HOME DRUNK ONE NIGHT...
When I woke up the next morning, it was just there.
...AND DON'T REALLY REMEMBER THE DETAILS.

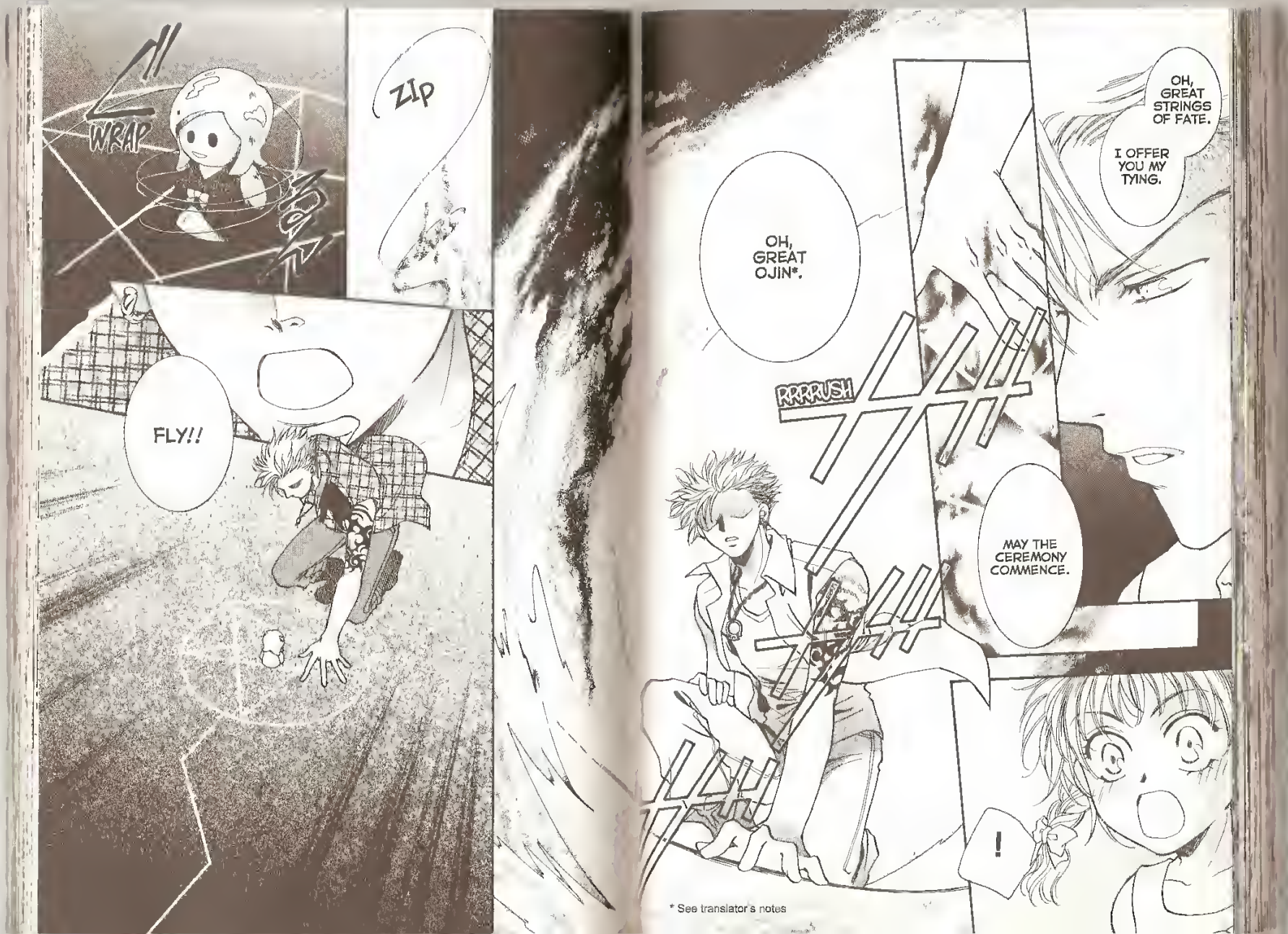
IF IT'S AN EARTHEN DOLL, WE SHOULD BE FINE LEAVING THIS CASE TO TSUNA.
?
SO, THE DOLL'S MADE OUT OF CLAY?
ALRIGHTY, THEN!

WE'RE REALLY CUTTING IT CLOSE.
A MONTH AGO?
I PICKED UP THE DOLL AROUND HERE.
CRUNCH
LUCKILY THERE'S "EARTH" HERE TO WORK WITH.
EARTH!?
AND DIDN'T HE SAY...?
IF IT'S AN EARTHEN OOLL WE'RE OEALING WITH...
FOR A RESIOENTIAL AREA, THAT'S A BIG VACANT LOT...
THAT'S ODO...

WHAT IS IT?
OH.
TAKE THIS WITH YOU.
IT'S CHIKO-CHAN'S CHANGE OF CLOTHES. ♡
IN CASE SHE ENDS UP SPINNING SHIROGANE.
HE'S SO EASY...
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME, YOU BRAT!
STOMP
STOMP
Mcoooww...
Oooh, you naughty boy!
YOU'D RATHER SEE HER OTHER-WISE?
WH... WHY DO I HAVE TO-!?
SLAM

...DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION, AND BECAUSE OF THE POWER RELATIONSHIPS, I MAY NOT NECESSARILY ALWAYS BE STRONG WHEN IT COMES TO "EARTHEN" THINGS.
STILL, SINCE THE FIVE ELEMENTS ARE AN IDEAL CLASSIFICATION...
Okaaaay ?
MY THREAD IS ASSOCIATED WITH EARTH.
And that's why I was put in charge of the dollcase.
EACH OF THESE FIVE ENERGIES...
...IS ALIGNED WITH A CERTAIN DIRECTION, SEASON, AND TIME.
WOOD → BLUE
FIRE → RED
EARTH → YELLOW
METAL → WHITE
WATER → BLACK
AND EACH OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS IS ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH ONE OF THEM.
YOU'LL SEE.
WELL.
ETCH
CLUNK
FSS

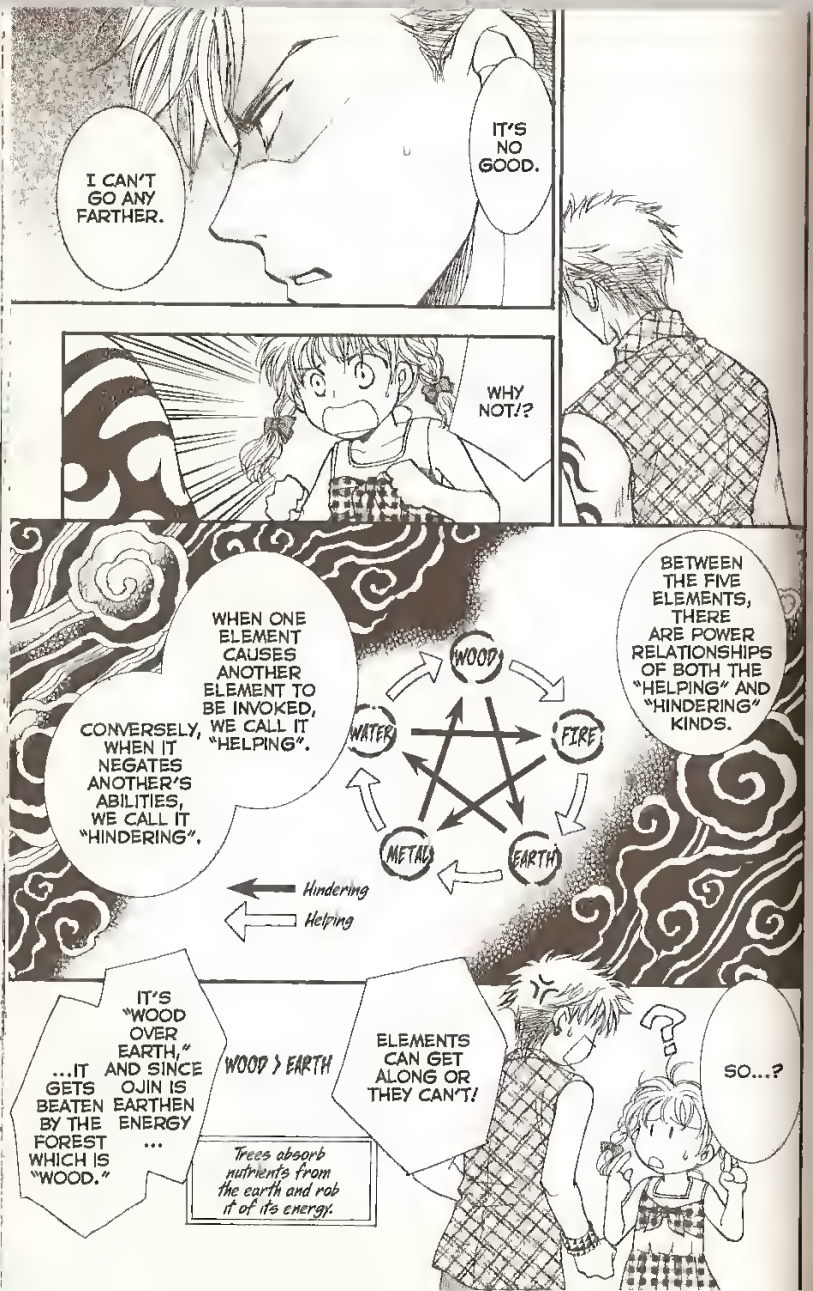

HEY.
HOW COME THE FACT THAT IT'S AN "EARTHEN DOLL" MADE IT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, TSUNA?
Didn't Ake-nii teach you anything?
IF YOU'RE GONNA BE USING ONE OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS...
...AT LEAST LEARN ABOUT THE FIVE ELEMENTS!
NOOGIE
LISTEN, YOU...
NOOGIE
THE FIVE ELEMENTS?
ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT CHINESE VIEW OF THE WORLD...
...ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE MADE UP OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF WOOD, FIRE, EARTH, METAL AND WATER, ALL GOING THROUGH A CYCLE.
THAT'S HOW THEY ARE THOUGHT OF AS BEING ORGANIZED.
WOOD
FIRE
EARTH
METAL
TER

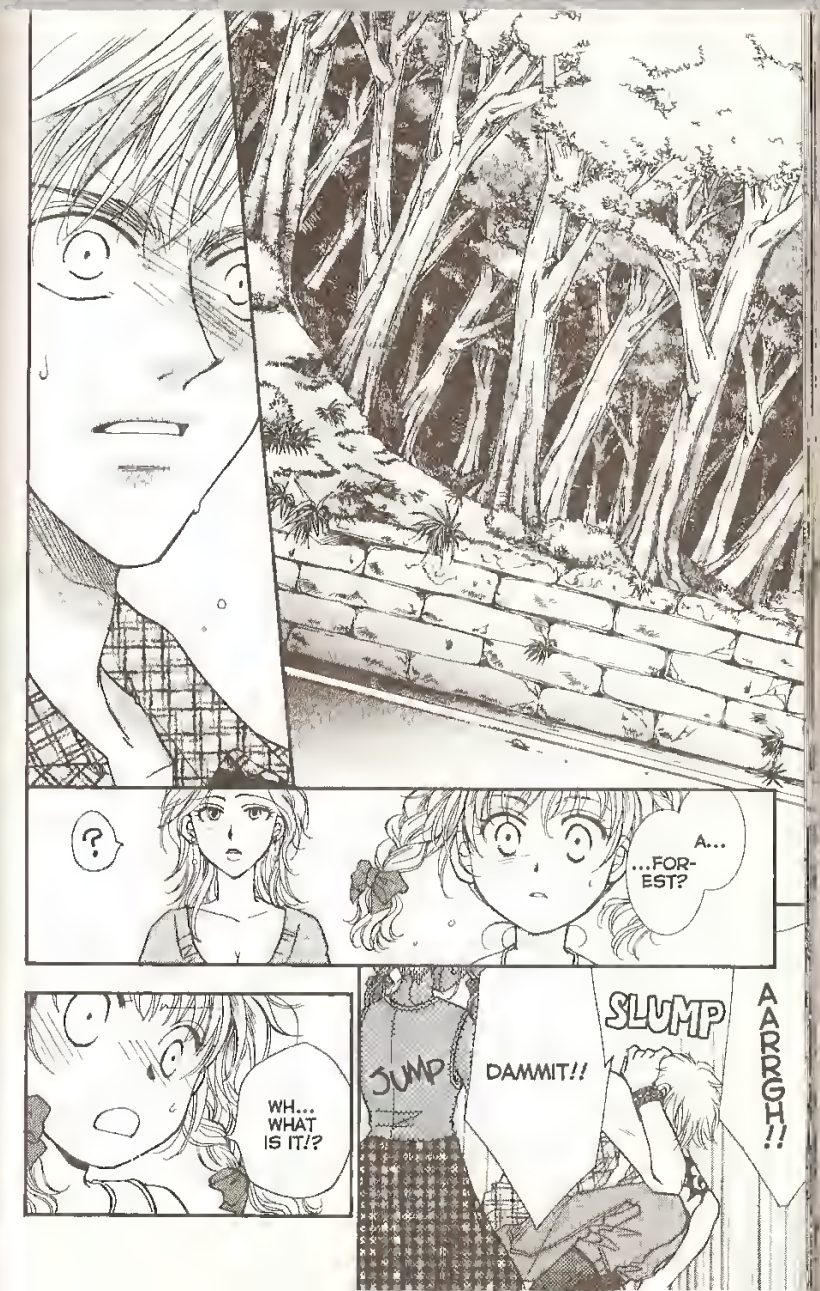


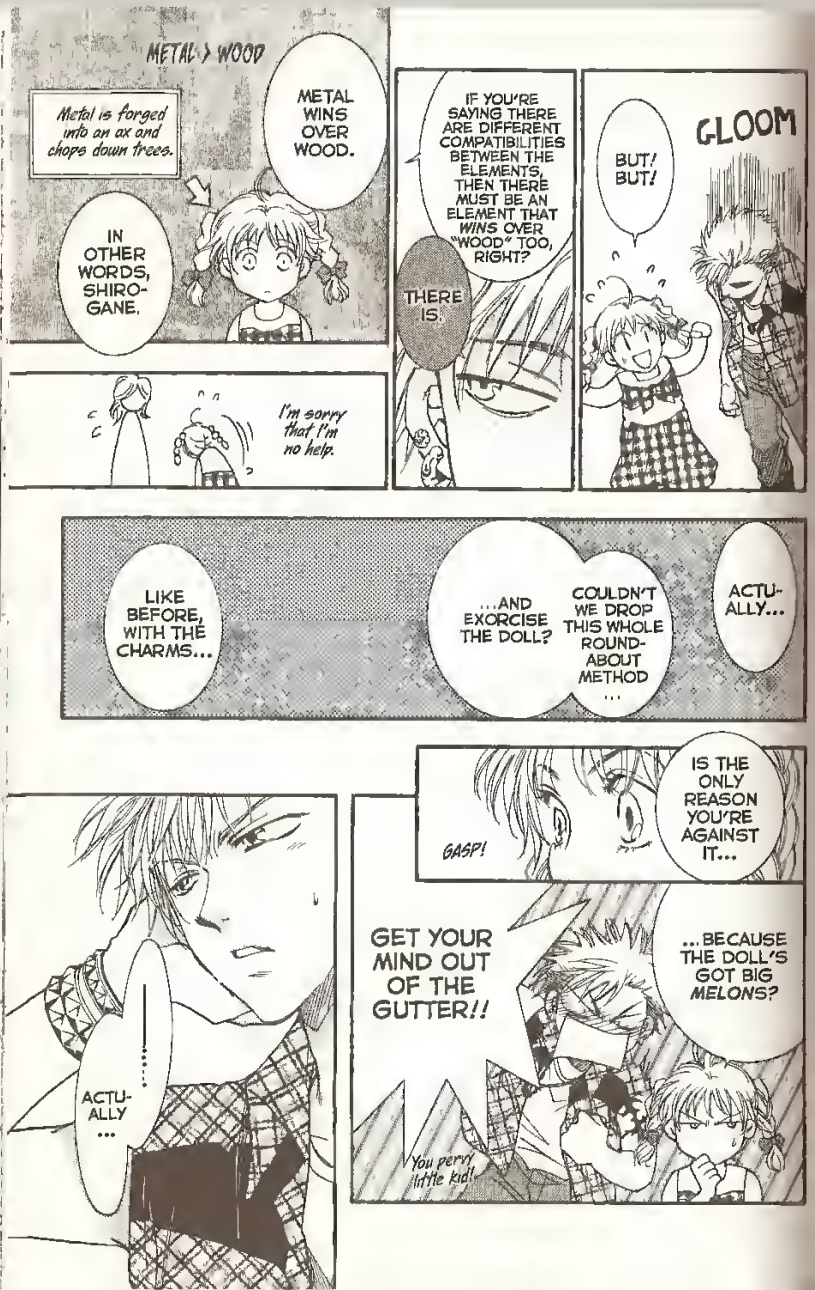
* See translator's notes

SEE? I'M GOOD AT STUFF!
Woh ha ha ha!
Show some respect!
WOW, THIS IS REALLY SOME-THING...
!
THE THREAD'S STOPPED MOVING.
I meant a really cool police dog.
WE'RE CLOSE!
THIS METHOD REMINDS ME OF A DOG.
I'LL CHOKE YOU, YOU DAMN RUNT!

HUH!?
THERE'S A GOLDEN THREAD...
...RUNNING OVER THE EARTH!!
WHOA!!
LET'S GO AFTER IT!
DASH
WITH THE DOLL'S LINGERING EMOTIONS, AND THE MEMORIES OF THE EARTH HERE, I CAN TIE ITS STRING OF FATE BACK TO THE ORIGINAL OWNER.

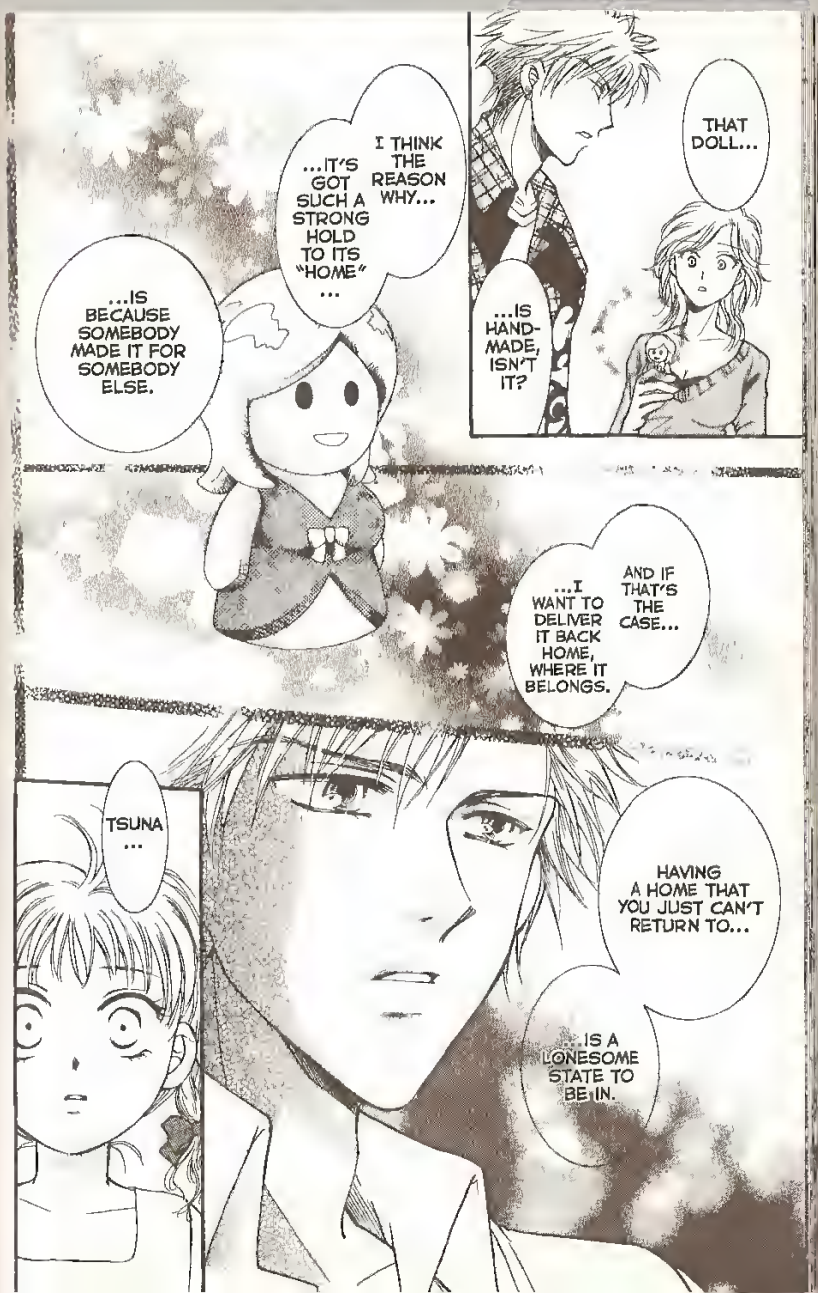

I CAN'T GO ANY FARTHER.
IT'S NO GOOD.
WHY NOT!?
BETWEEN THE FIVE ELEMENTS, THERE ARE POWER RELATIONSHIPS OF BOTH THE "HELPING" AND "HINDERING" KINDS.
WHEN ONE ELEMENT CAUSES ANOTHER ELEMENT TO BE INVOKED, WE CALL IT "HELPING".
CONVERSELY, WHEN IT NEGATES ANOTHER'S ABILITIES, WE CALL IT "HINDERING".
WOOD
FIRE
EARTH
METAL
WATER
Hindering
Helping
SO...?
ELEMENTS CAN GET ALONG OR THEY CAN'T!
WOOD > EARTH
Trees absorb nutrients from the earth and rob it of its energy.
IT'S "WOOD OVER EARTH," AND SINCE OJIN IS EARTHEN ENERGY ...
...IT GETS BEATEN BY THE FOREST WHICH IS "WOOD."

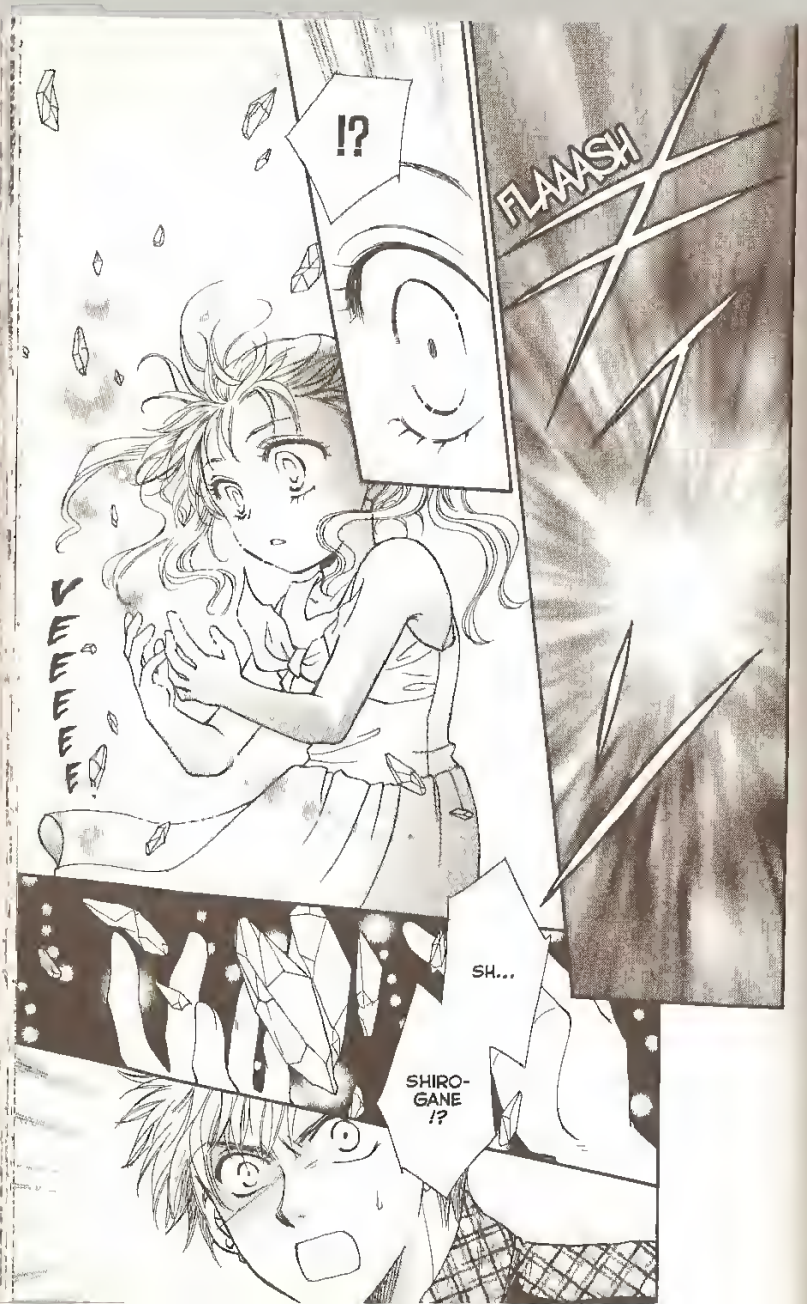

A...
...FOR-EST?
?
WH... WHAT IS IT!?
AARRGH!!
SLUMP
DAMMIT!!
JUMP

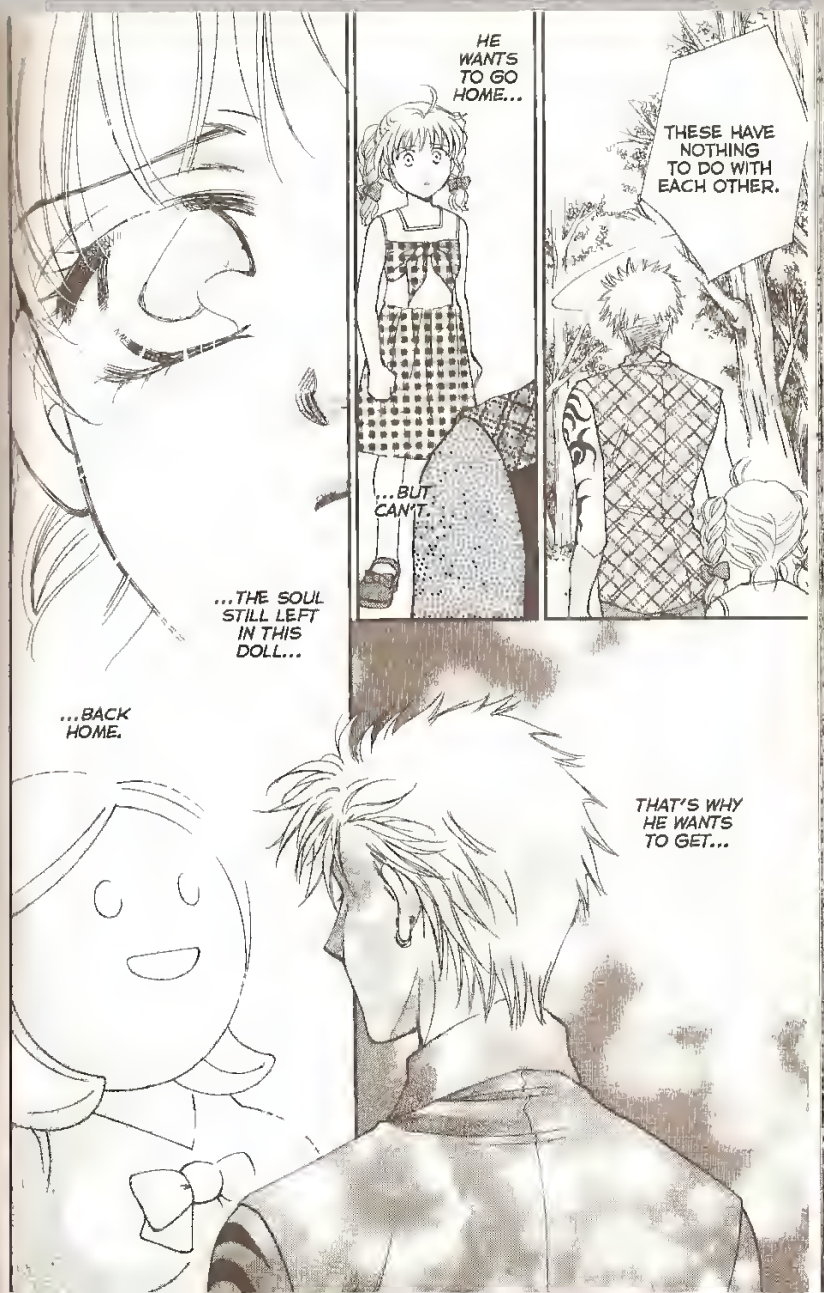

METAL > WOOD
Metal is forged into an ax and chops down trees.
METAL WINS OVER WOOD.
IN OTHER WORDS, SHIRO-GANE.
I'm sorry that I'm no help.
IF YOU'RE SAYING THERE ARE DIFFERENT COMPATIBILITIES BETWEEN THE ELEMENTS, THEN THERE MUST BE AN ELEMENT THAT WINS OVER "WOOD" TOO, RIGHT?
THERE IS.
BUT! BUT!
GLOOM
LIKE BEFORE, WITH THE CHARMS...
...AND EXORCISE THE DOLL?
COULDN'T WE DROP THIS WHOLE ROUND-ABOUT METHOD ...
ACTU-ALLY...
ACTU-ALLY ...
GASP!
IS THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE AGAINST IT...
GET YOUR MIND OUT OF THE GUTTER!!
...BECAUSE THE DOLL'S GOT BIG MELONS?
You perv, little kid!

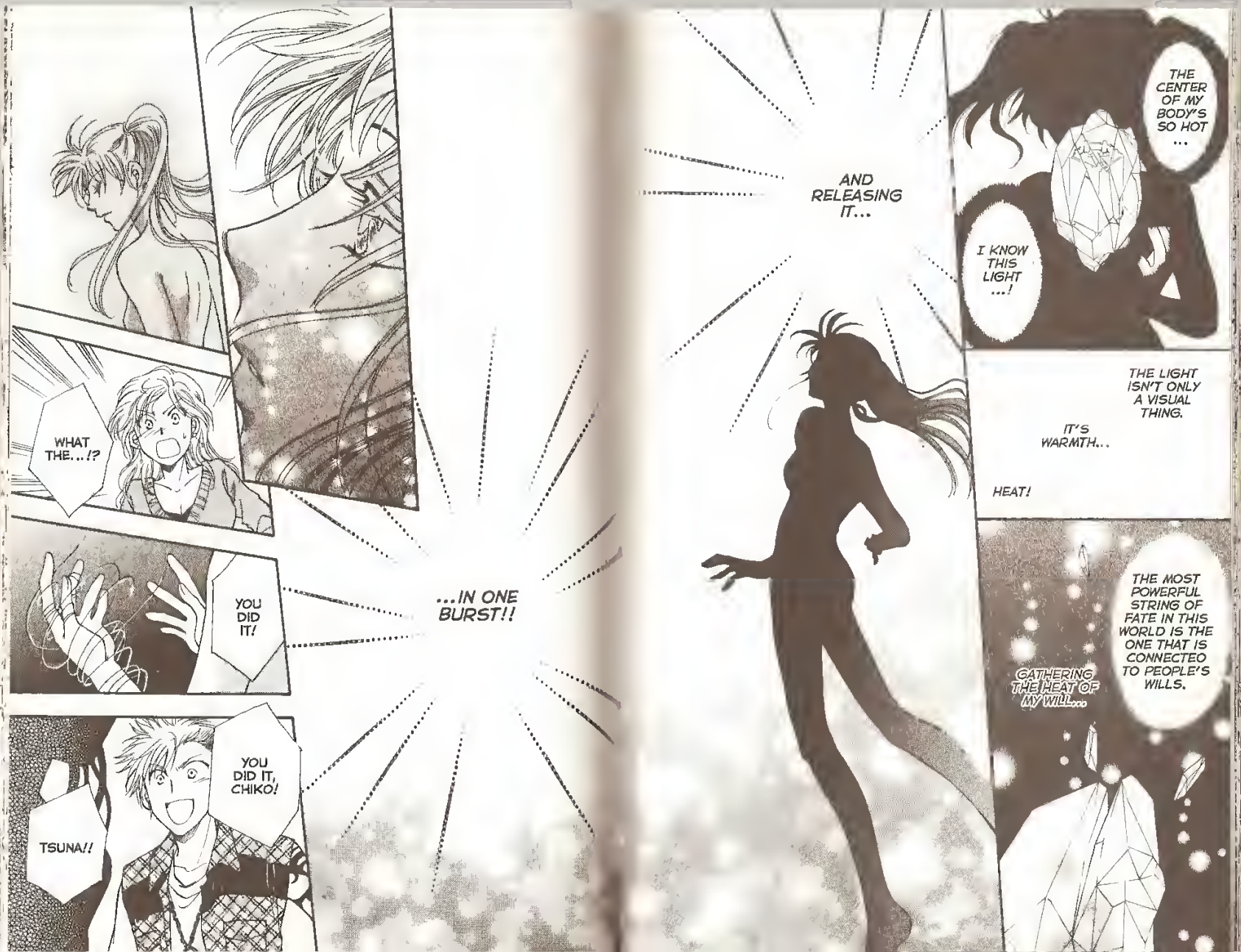
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS DOLL'S HOME IS?
SO, I'M GONNA GO BACK FOR A SEC ...
UH, MY BROTHERS AKE AND AYA MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
I'M SORRY...
ON TOP OF THAT, THE FOREST AHEAD IS A GROVE OF THE VILLAGE SHRINE.
IT'S A MASS OF SACRED TREES THAT SAFEGUARD THE INDIGENOUS TEMPLES AND SHRINES.

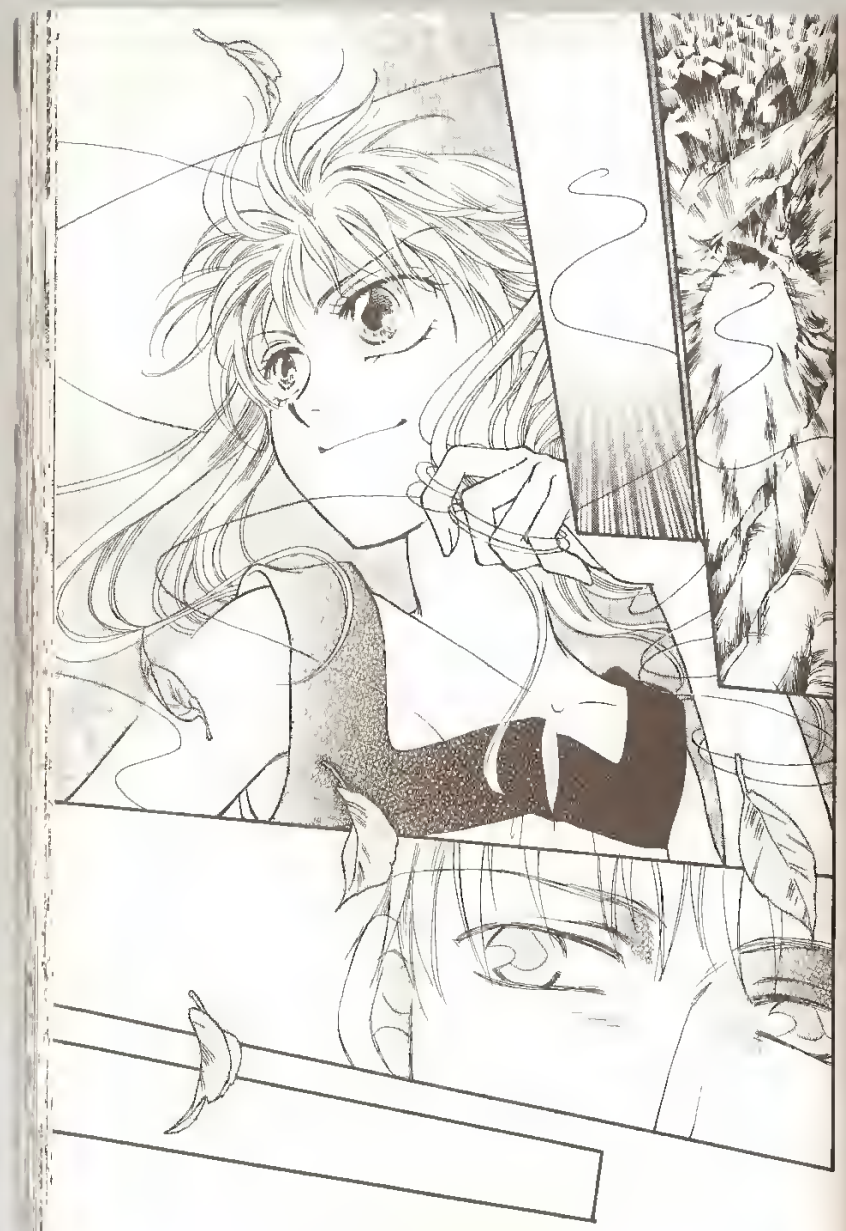
COULD IT BE ...
...THE STRING OF FATE TO YOUR MOST PRECIOUS THING WAS...
GRANTED THE POWER TO TIE OTHERS' STRINGS OF FATE ...
...THE STRING OF FATE TYING THEM TO WHAT'S MOST PRECIOUS IS SEVERED.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S HAD TO PAY A PRICE.
THERE ARE SOME TIES THAT CAN'T COME BACK ONCE THEY'VE BEEN CUT!!
TSUNA REALLY LOVED HIS FAMILY...


THAT DOLL...
...IS HAND-MADE, ISN'T IT?
I THINK THE REASON WHY...
...IT'S GOT SUCH A STRONG HOLD TO ITS "HOME" ...
...IS BECAUSE SOMEBODY MADE IT FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.
AND IF THAT'S THE CASE...
...I WANT TO DELIVER IT BACK HOME, WHERE IT BELONGS.
TSUNA ...
HAVING A HOME THAT YOU JUST CAN'T RETURN TO...
...IS A LONESOME STATE TO BE IN.

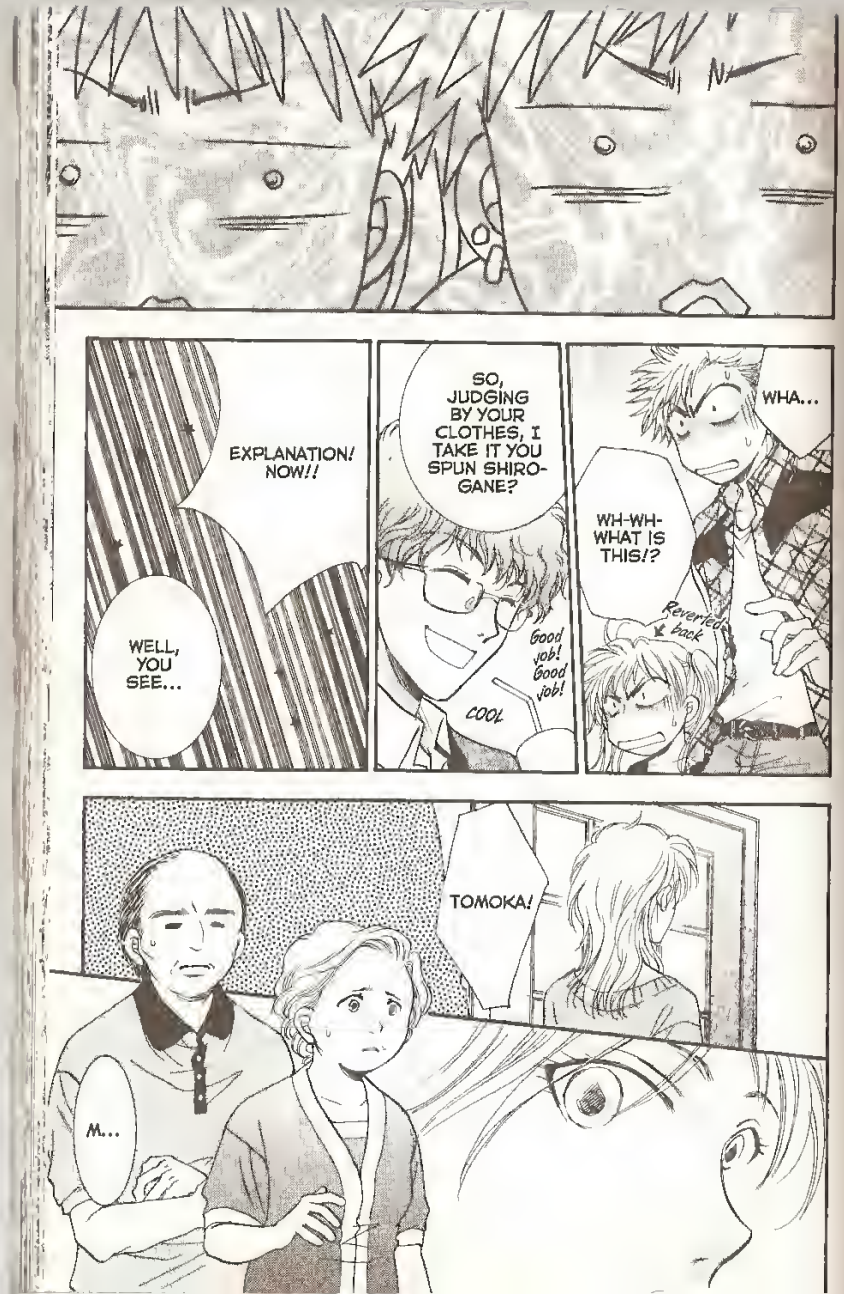

!?
FLAASH
VEEEEE
SH...
SHIRO-GANE !?

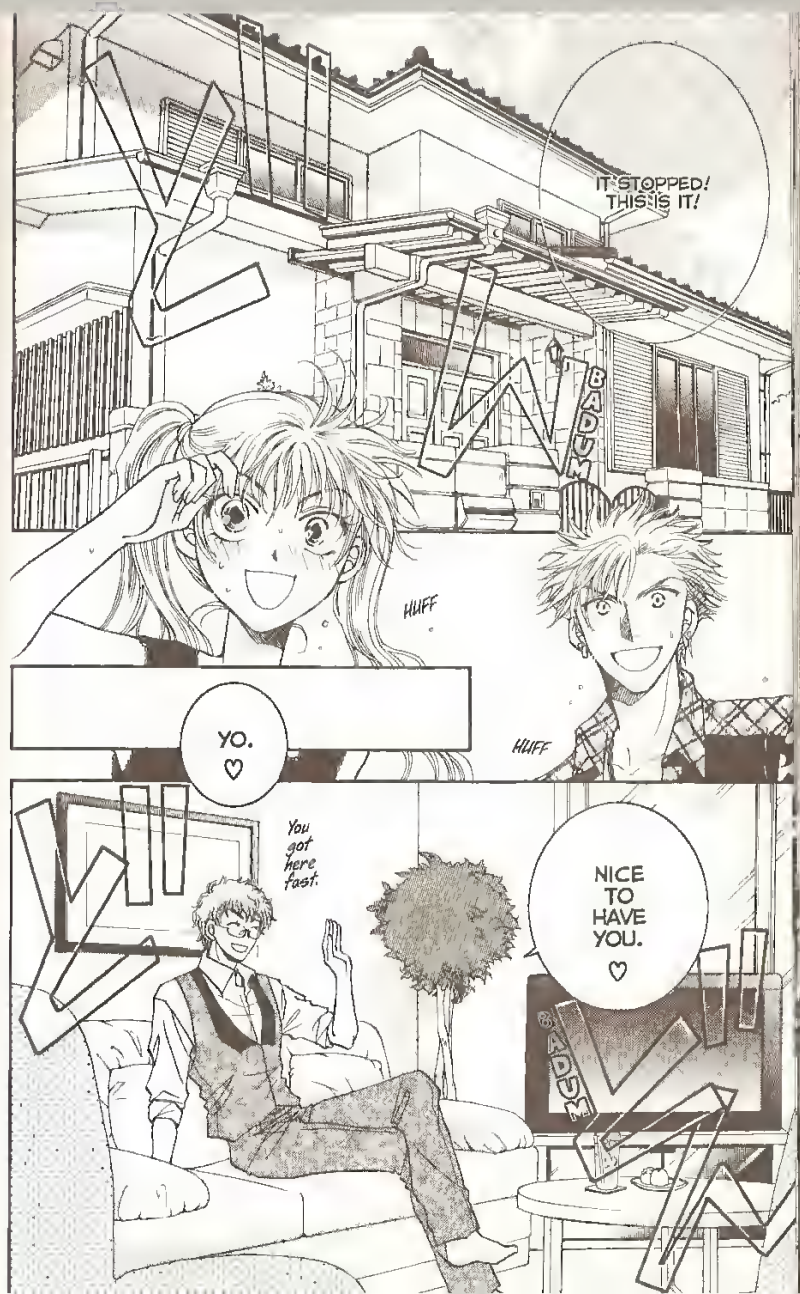

HE WANTS TO GO HOME...
...BUT CAN'T.
THESE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH EACH OTHER.
...THE SOUL STILL LEFT IN THIS DOLL...
...BACK HOME.
THAT'S WHY HE WANTS TO GET...


WHAT THE...!?
YOU DID IT!
TSUNA!!
YOU DID IT, CHIKO!
...IN ONE BURST!!
AND RELEASING IT...
THE CENTER OF MY BODY'S SO HOT ...
I KNOW THIS LIGHT ...!
THE LIGHT ISN'T ONLY A VISUAL THING.
IT'S WARMTH...
HEAT!
GATHERING THE HEAT OF MY WILL...
THE MOST POWERFUL STRING OF FATE IN THIS WORLD IS THE ONE THAT IS CONNECTED TO PEOPLE'S WILLS.

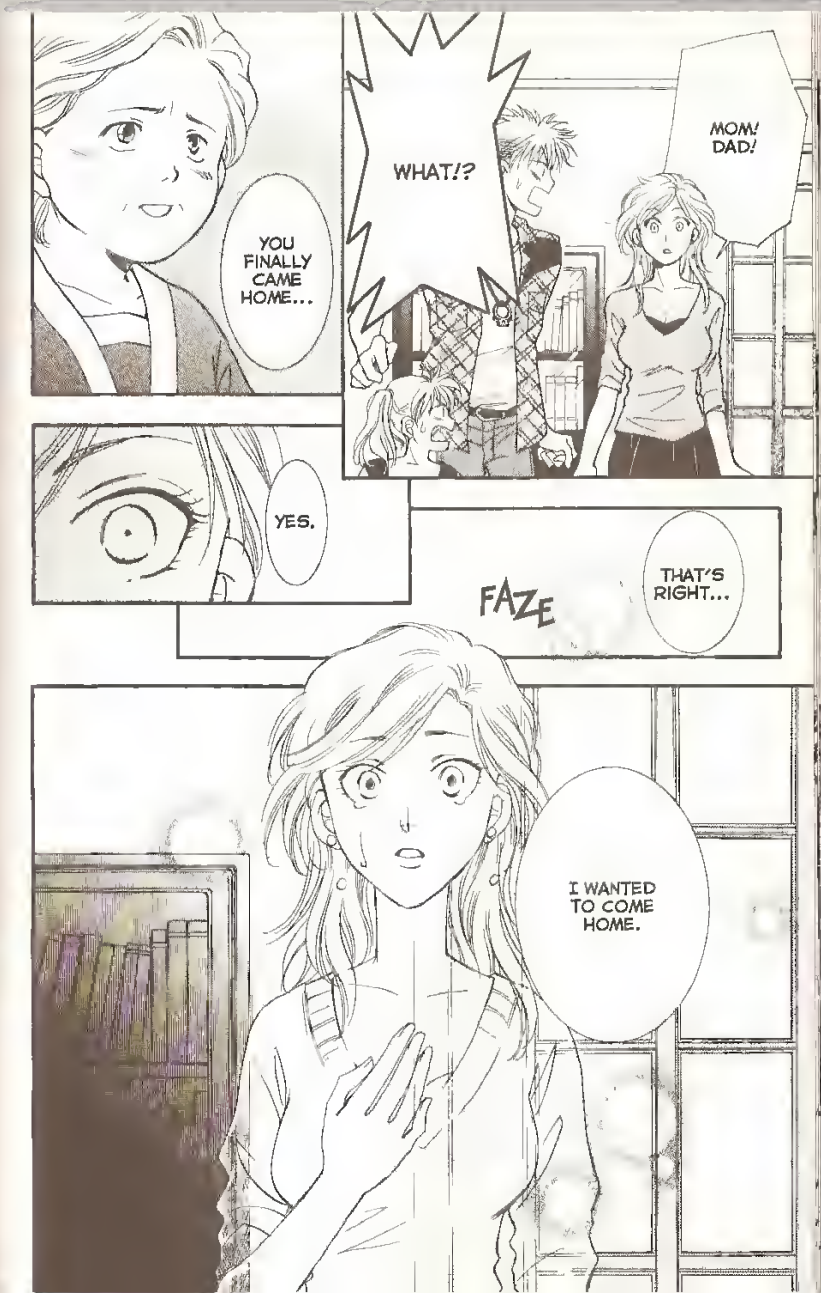


So, he did see.
I DIDN'T SEE ANY-THING!
Maybe a little...
PUNCH
YOU HORN DOG!!
WE'RE GOING TO TIE SHIROGANE TO OJIN.
NOW WATCH CLOSELY.
TWIRL
SHIRO-GANE!
RUSTLE
GO...
NOW!!
RUSTLE

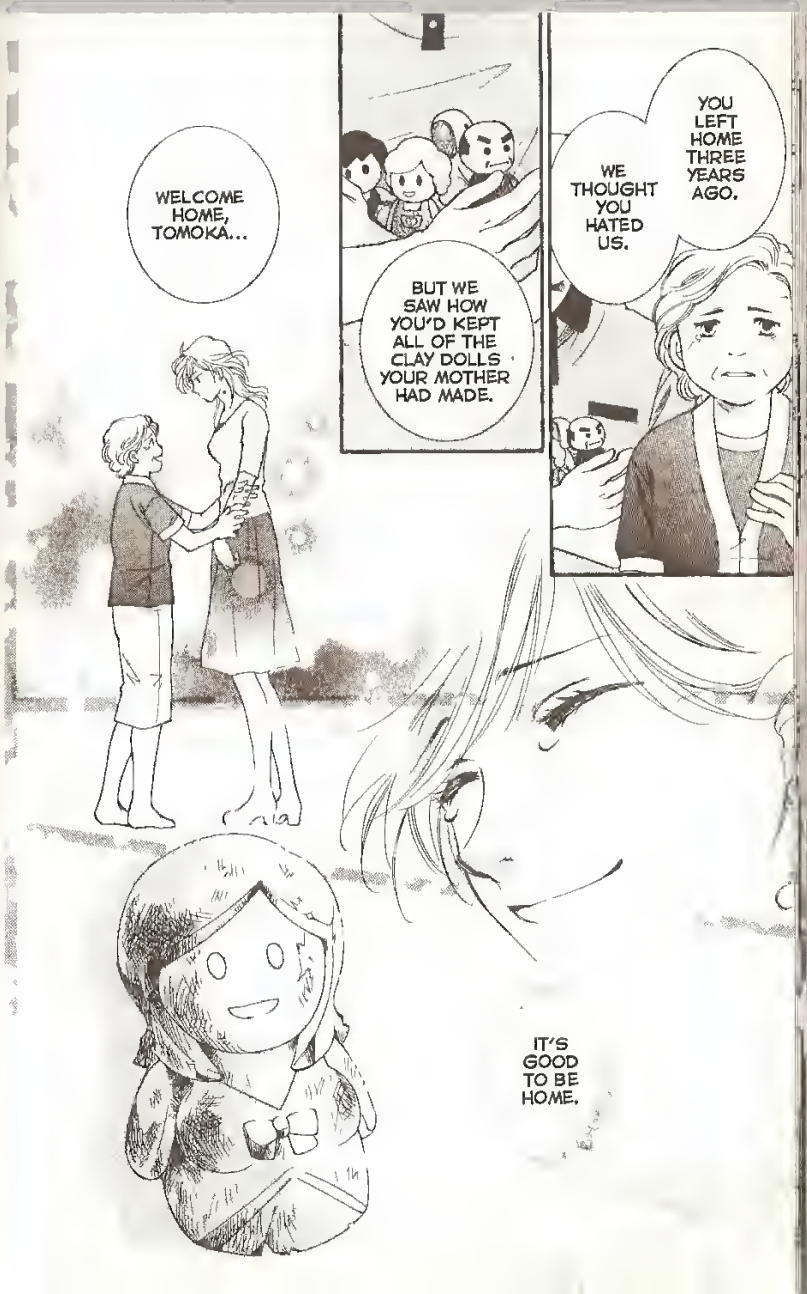

EXPLANATION! NOW!!
WELL, YOU SEE...
SO, JUDGING BY YOUR CLOTHES, I TAKE IT YOU SPUN SHIRO-GANE?
Good job! Good job!
COOL
WHA...
WH-WH-WHAT IS THIS!?
Reverted back
TOMOKA!
M...

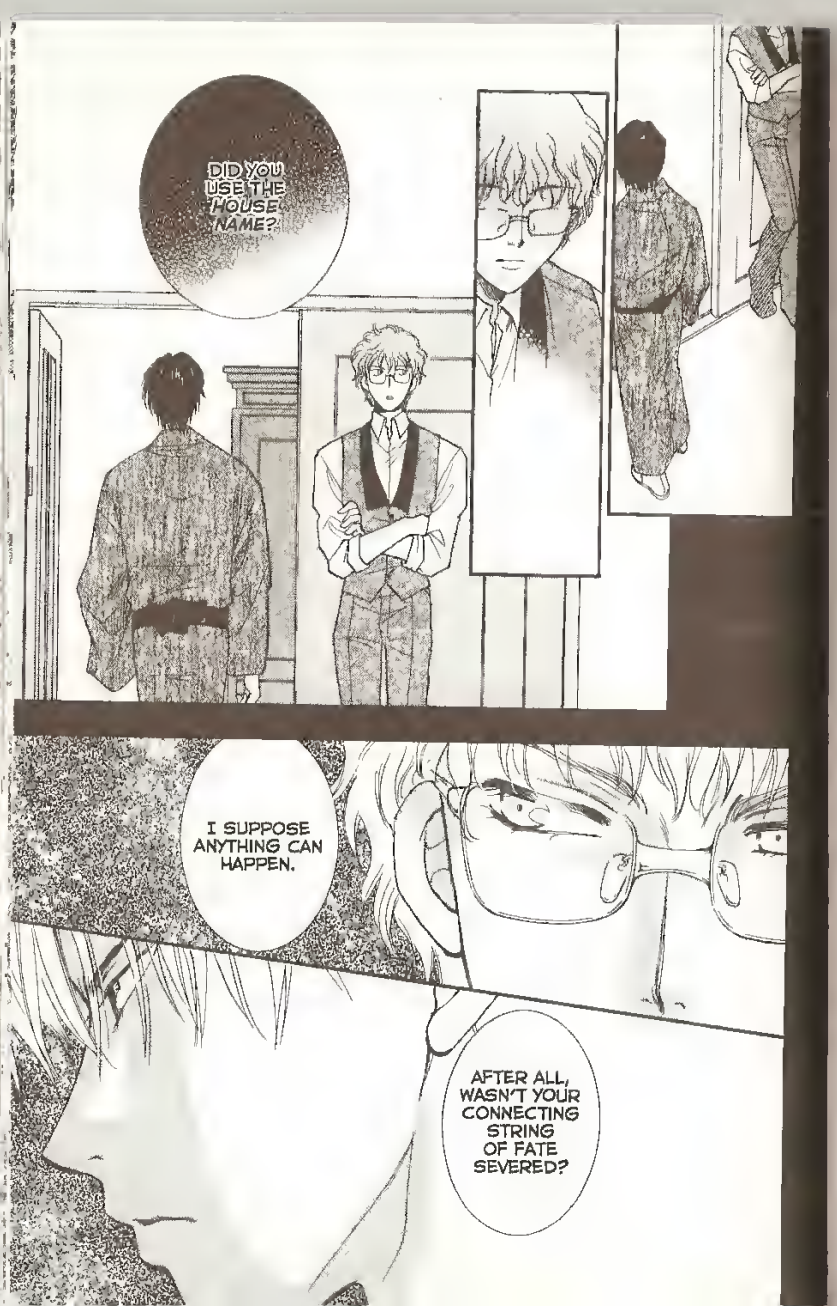

IT STOPPED! THIS IS IT!
BADUM
HUFF
HUFF
YO. ♡
You got here fast.
NICE TO HAVE YOU. ♡
BADUM

A MONTH AGO, SHE DIED OF A GAS LEAK IN HER APARTMENT.
DIED!?
BECAUSE IT HAPPENED LATE AT NIGHT...
...TOMOKA'S BODY WAS RETURNED TO HER PARENTS' HOME, BUT SHE NEVER REALIZED SHE WAS DEAD.
HER SOUL COULDN'T GO HOME, SO IT ENTERED THE DOLL TO WANDER AIMLESSLY.
IF YOU KNEW, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO!?
THERE'D BE NO MEANING IN BRINGING HER HOME RIGHT OFF THE BAT.
IF SHE DIDN'T GO THROUGH THE PROCESS OF RETURNING HOME, HERSELF...
... WHAT'S KEEPING HER FROM PASSING ON WOULD NEVER BE CORRECTLY DEALT WITH.


YOU FINALLY CAME HOME...
WHAT!?
MOM! DAD!
YES.
FAZE
THAT'S RIGHT...
I WANTED TO COME HOME.

GAAAAAH!!
I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS!!
...BUT YOU USED THE POWER OF SUGGESTION TO KEEP ME FROM REALIZING SHE WAS A GHOST!
NOT ONLY DID YOU LIE TO ME...
UUUURGH!!!
I KNEW YOU'D BE NO GOOD AT KEEPING UP THE ACT FOR HER, TSUNA.
PLACID

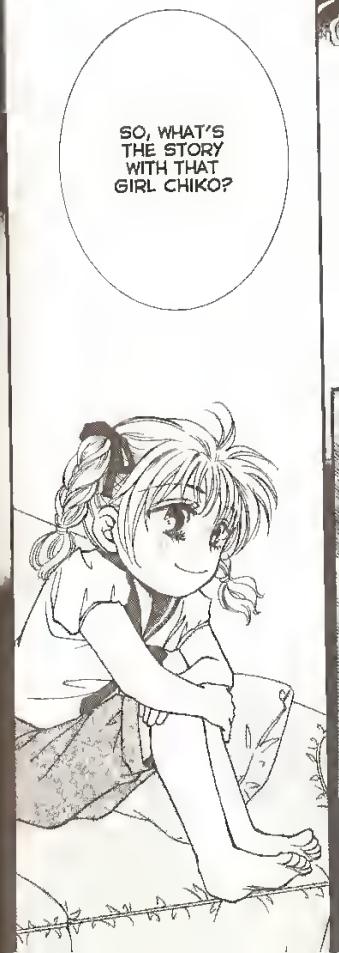

WELCOME HOME, TOMOKA...
BUT WE SAW HOW YOU'D KEPT ALL OF THE CLAY DOLLS YOUR MOTHER HAD MADE.
WE THOUGHT YOU HATED US.
YOU LEFT HOME THREE YEARS AGO.
IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.


DID YOU USE THE HOUSE NAME?
I SUPPOSE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN.
AFTER ALL, WASN'T YOUR CONNECTING STRING OF FATE SEVERED?

WHAAAT!?
IT'S BEEN DECIDED THAT CHIYAKO WILL BE STAYING AT OUR HOUSE.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH...
I guess.
?
H-H-HOW DID YOU PER-SUADE HIM!?
Yaaaaay!! I'm gonna do my best!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT MY DAD SAID OKAY...
I'm so lucky!
WE EVEN RECEIVED CONSENT FROM HER FATHER.

QUIET.
Fine, fine.

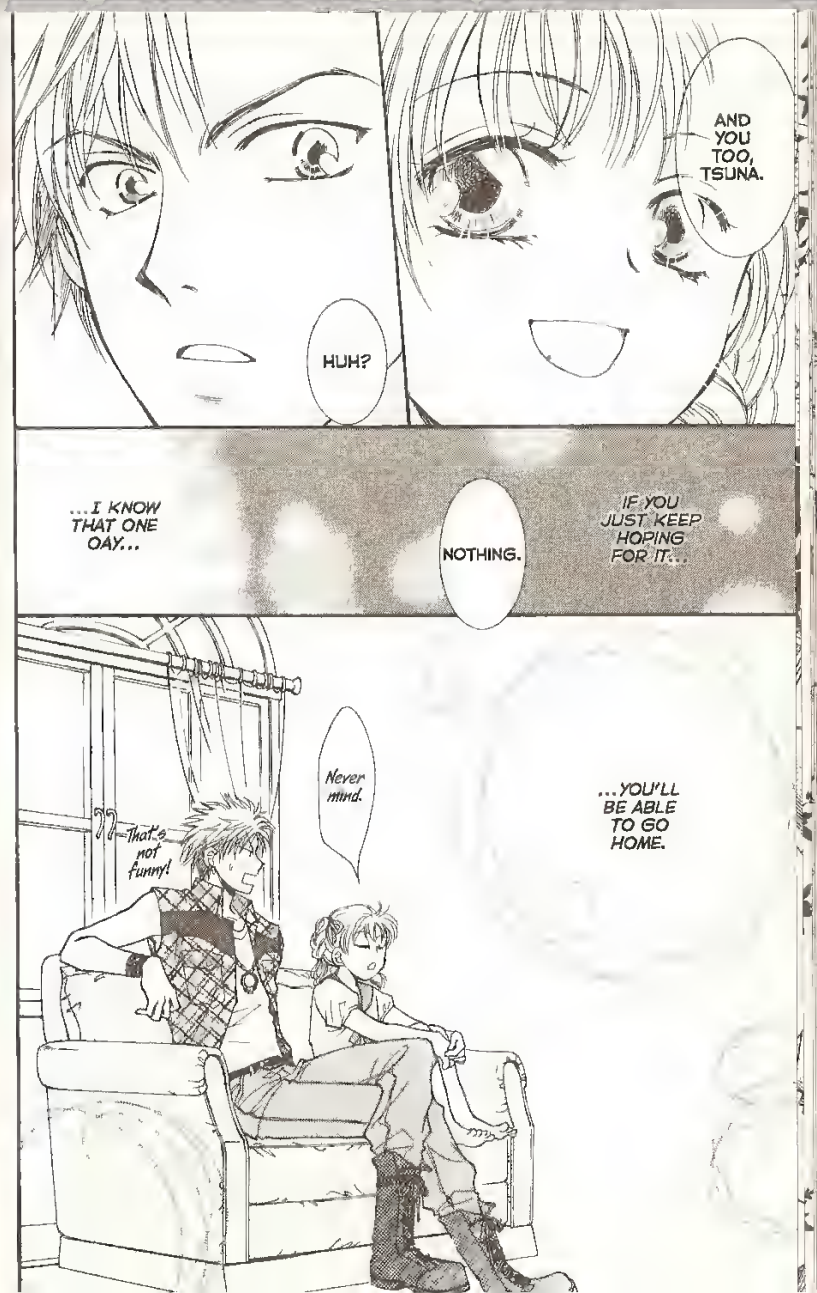
OH, WELL.
AT LEAST SHE MADE IT BACK HOME, RIGHT?
YEAH, I GUESS SO...


SO, WHAT'S THE STORY WITH THAT GIRL CHIKO?

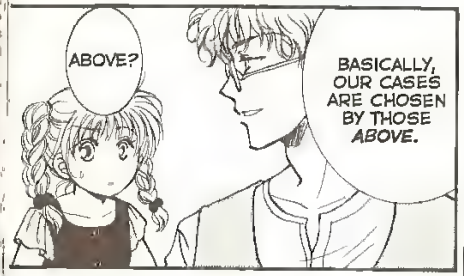
IN CONTRAST TO YOU, AKEO-SAN...
...WHO SUFFERS FROM "FIRE BEATS METAL" AND WOULD ONLY IMMOBILIZE SHIROGANE...
...SO THAT SHE WOULD SPIN SHIROGANE, DIDN'T YOU?
AND IN THIS MOST RECENT CASE, YOU USED TSUNA...

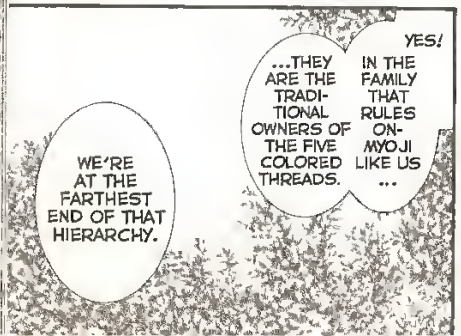
FIRE > METAL
Fire melts metal
EARTH --> METAL
Earth cultivates metals (minerals)
...TSUNA AND HIS "EARTH EMPOWERS METAL" ...
...ACTIVATED IT.
TSUNA'S JUST ABOUT THE ONLY ONE WHO WOULD BUY THAT.
...SHE'S SUDDENLY CHOSEN BY SHIROGANE. IT ALL SMELLS LIKE A SET-UP TO ME.
NOT TO MENTION THAT AFTER SHE RANDOMLY WANDERS AROUND THE HOUSE ...

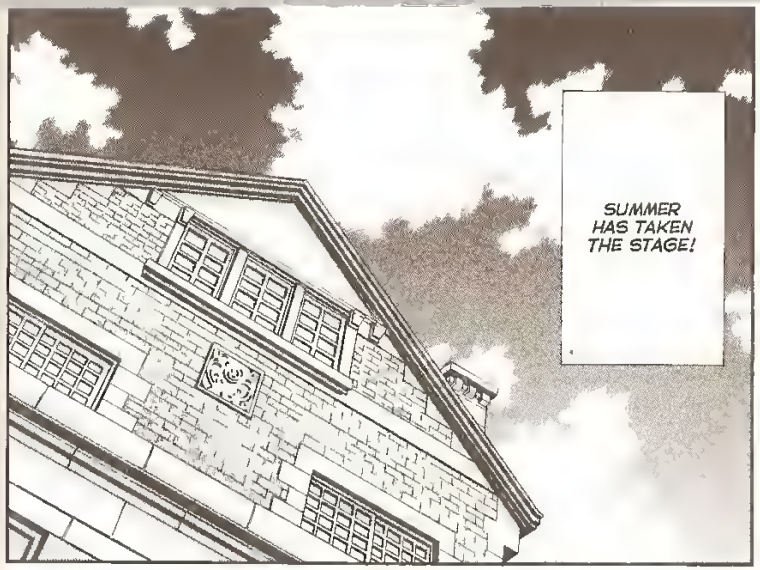
Third Binding
縛りの巻

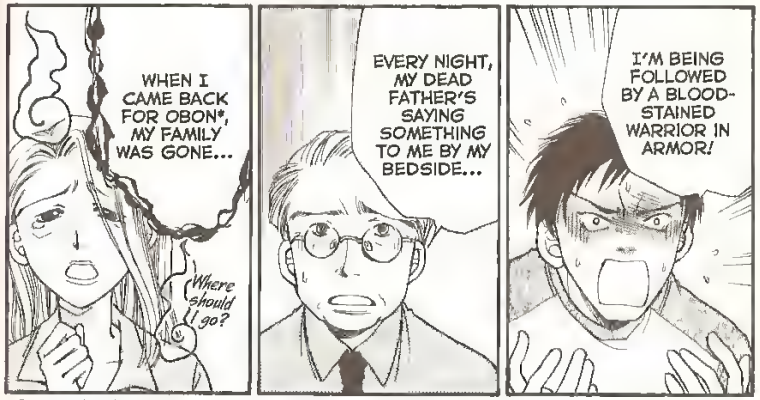

AND YOU TOO, TSUNA.
HUH?
...I KNOW THAT ONE OAY...
NOTHING.
IF YOU JUST KEEP HOPING FOR IT...
Never mind.
That's not funny!
...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GO HOME.

* See translator's notes




WE'RE AT THE FARTHEST END OF THAT HIERARCHY.
...THEY ARE THE TRADI-TIONAL OWNERS OF THE FIVE COLORED THREADS.
YES! IN THE FAMILY THAT RULES ON-MYOJI LIKE US ...

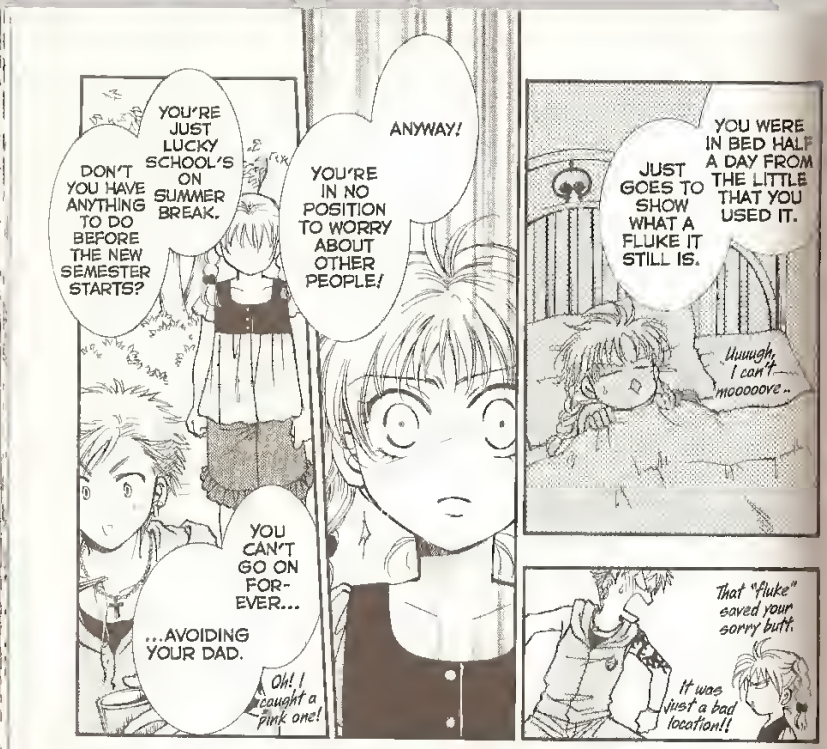



WHEN I CAME BACK FOR OBON*, MY FAMILY WAS GONE...
(Where should I go?
EVERY NIGHT, MY DEAD FATHER'S SAYING SOMETHING TO ME BY MY BEDSIDE...
I'M BEING FOLLOWED BY A BLOOD-STAINED WARRIOR IN ARMOR!

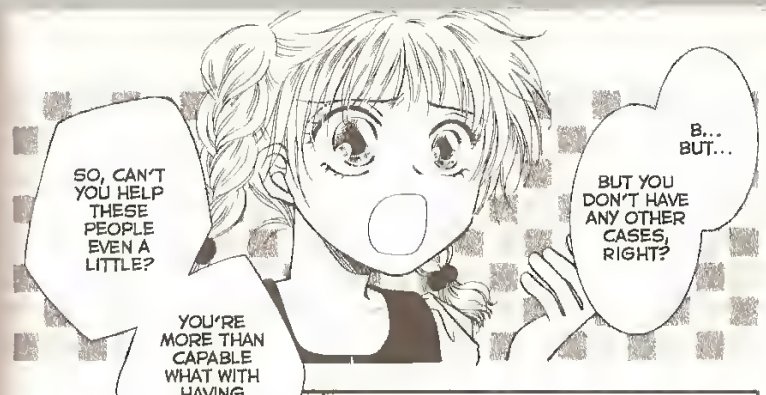
* See translator's notes

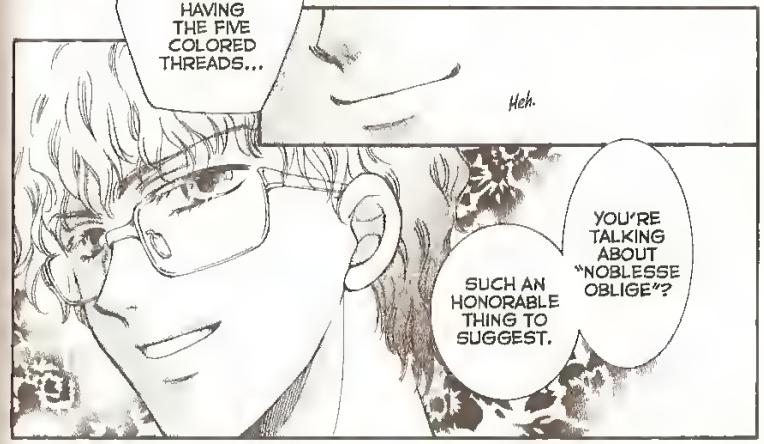
SO, OUR GROUP OF TYERS SHOULD BE SUPER BUSY...

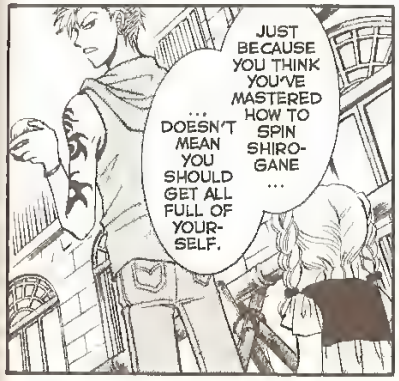
THE JAPANESE SUMMER AWAKENS EVIL RIVER AND MOUNTAIN SPIRITS. MAKING FOR A BUSY SEASON.


DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO DO BEFORE THE NEW SEMESTER STARTS?
YOU'RE JUST LUCKY SCHOOL'S ON SUMMER BREAK.
ANYWAY!
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO WORRY ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE!
YOU CAN'T GO ON FOR-EVER...
...AVOIDING YOUR DAD.
Oh! I caught a pink one!
JUST GOES TO SHOW WHAT A FLUKE IT STILL IS.
YOU WERE IN BED HALF A DAY FROM THE LITTLE THAT YOU USED IT.
Uuuugh, I can't mooooove..
That "fluke" saved your sorry butt.
It was just a bad location!!

IS BEING HESITANT AND FRETT-ING...
...GOING TO DISSOLVE MY PACT TO SHIROGANE ?
HUH?
IT WON'T, WILL IT?
SLURP
HOW WILL WORRYING SOLVE ANYTHING?
IF YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH TIME ON YOUR HANDS TO MEDDLE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS, THEN WORRY ABOUT YOUR OWN SITUATION!
.....


SO, CAN'T YOU HELP THESE PEOPLE EVEN A LITTLE?
B... BUT...
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CASES, RIGHT?

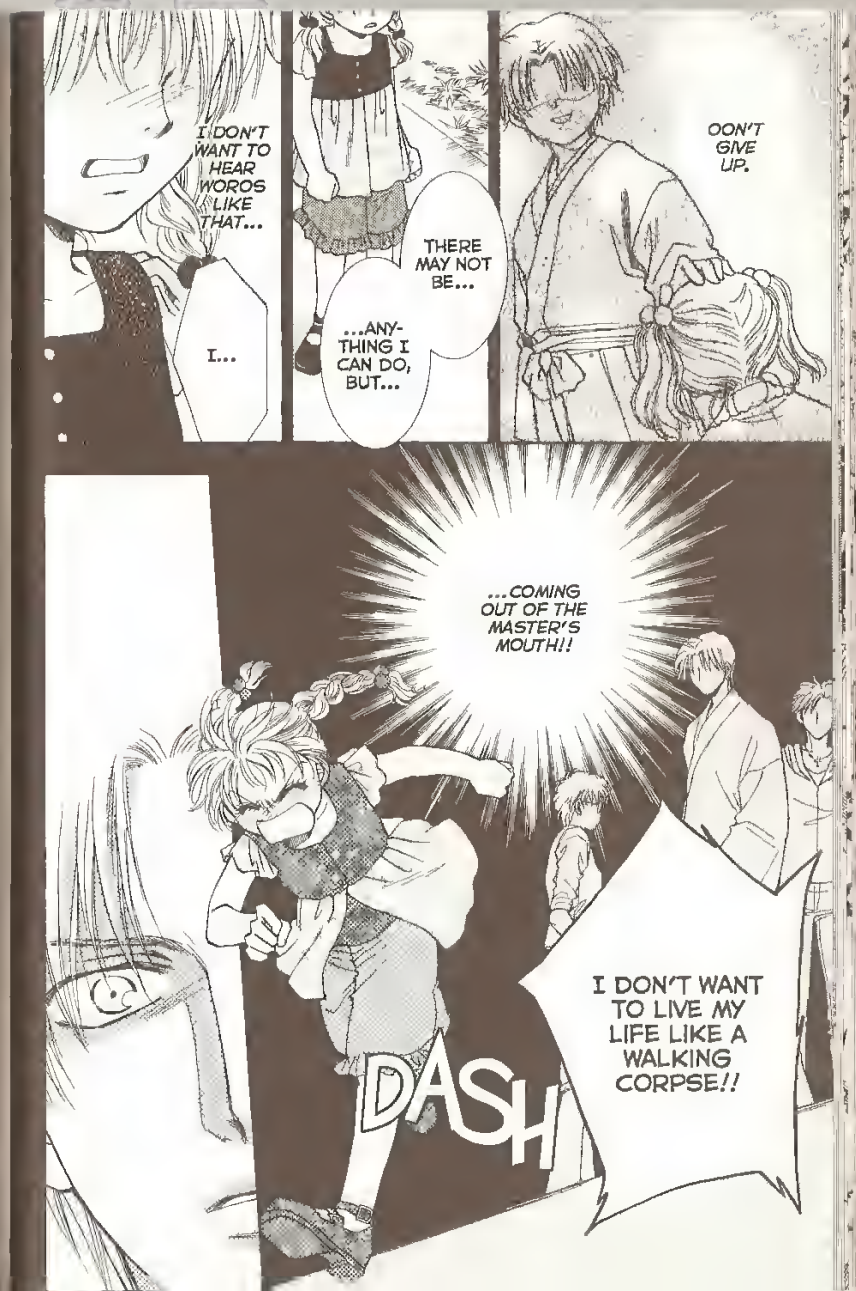

YOU'RE MORE THAN CAPABLE WHAT WITH HAVING THE FIVE COLORED THREADS...
Heh.
SUCH AN HONORABLE THING TO SUGGEST.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT "NOBLESSE OBLIGE"?


... DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD GET ALL FULL OF YOUR-SELF.
JUST BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU'VE MASTERED HOW TO SPIN SHIRO-GANE ...

HMPH
I don't know what that means, but I know I'm being mocked.
You trying to say "no blessings"?
N... NO-BLESSE WHAT?
Noblesse Oblige (latin)
The belief that aristocrats and those in powerful positions have heavier social responsibilities and duties.

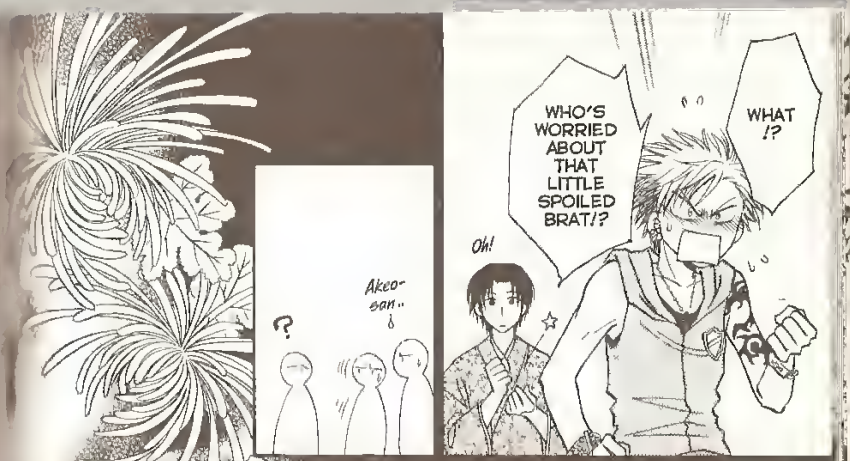
THE FIVE COLORED THREADS ...
...ARE NOT OMNIPOTENT.
WHAT'S THE POINT TO THE FIVE COLORED THREADS!?
THAT MAY BE, BUT...
MASTER ...
WHEN USED RECKLESSLY, THEY FURTHER TANGLE THE STRINGS OF FATE.
I DON'T LIKE THIS.
HEY, WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
PUTTING ON AIRS AND NOT EVEN USING THE POWER YOU HAVE...
...IS A HUGE WASTE!
WHY DO YOU EVEN HAVE THE FIVE COLORED THREADS, THEN?
SO, DOING WHATEVER I CAN OF MY OWN POWER...
...IS A MILLION TIMES MORE EFFECTIVE!
AND WHAT ARE THE FIVE COLORED THREADS, ANYWAY!?

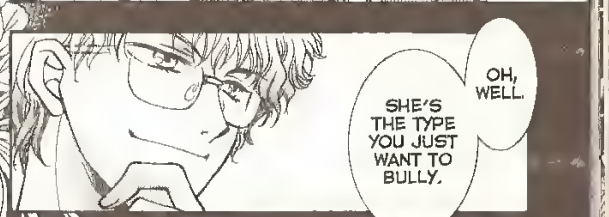
SHRED SHRED
PAUSE
?
WHY'D YOU ONLY DO IT TO MINE!?
Mountain of ginger
IDIOT!!
WAAAAH!!
YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID AT THAT POINT...
...
"WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, SO DON'T DO ANYTHING DANGER-OUS"!
HUH?
YOU BOTH GET ZEROES FOR THE ANSWERS YOU JUST GAVE.
YOU GET A ZERO.
DAMN BRAT...
I can't eat this!


I DON'T WANT TO HEAR WORDS LIKE THAT...
I...
THERE MAY NOT BE...
...ANY-THING I CAN DO, BUT...
DON'T GIVE UP.
...COMING OUT OF THE MASTER'S MOUTH!!
DASH
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE LIKE A WALKING CORPSE!!

IT'S NOT AS THOUGH...
...I'M NOT WORRYING ABOUT THESE THINGS.
THOSE IDIOTS!
I MIS-JUDGED THEM!
THAT BAND OF UNINSPIRED DO-NOTH-INGS!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
IN FACT, I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED, I HAVEN'T BEEN SLEEPING AT NIGHT!!
TUG
Look at these bags!!

WONDERING WHY I HAD TO GET MIXED UP IN THIS WHOLE MESS TO BEGIN WITH...
...AND IF I'LL EVER GO BACK TO NORMAL...
USING SHIROGANE, WHICH I DON'T EVEN REALLY UNDER-STAND...
SUDDENLY GETTING THIS BODY...

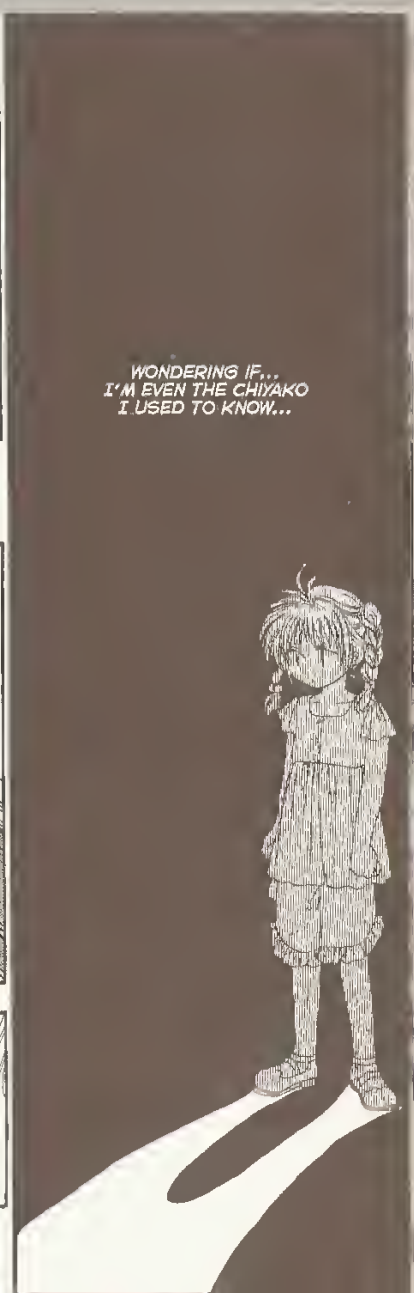

?
Akeo-san..
Oh!
WHO'S WORRIED ABOUT THAT LITTLE SPOILED BRAT!?
WHAT!?

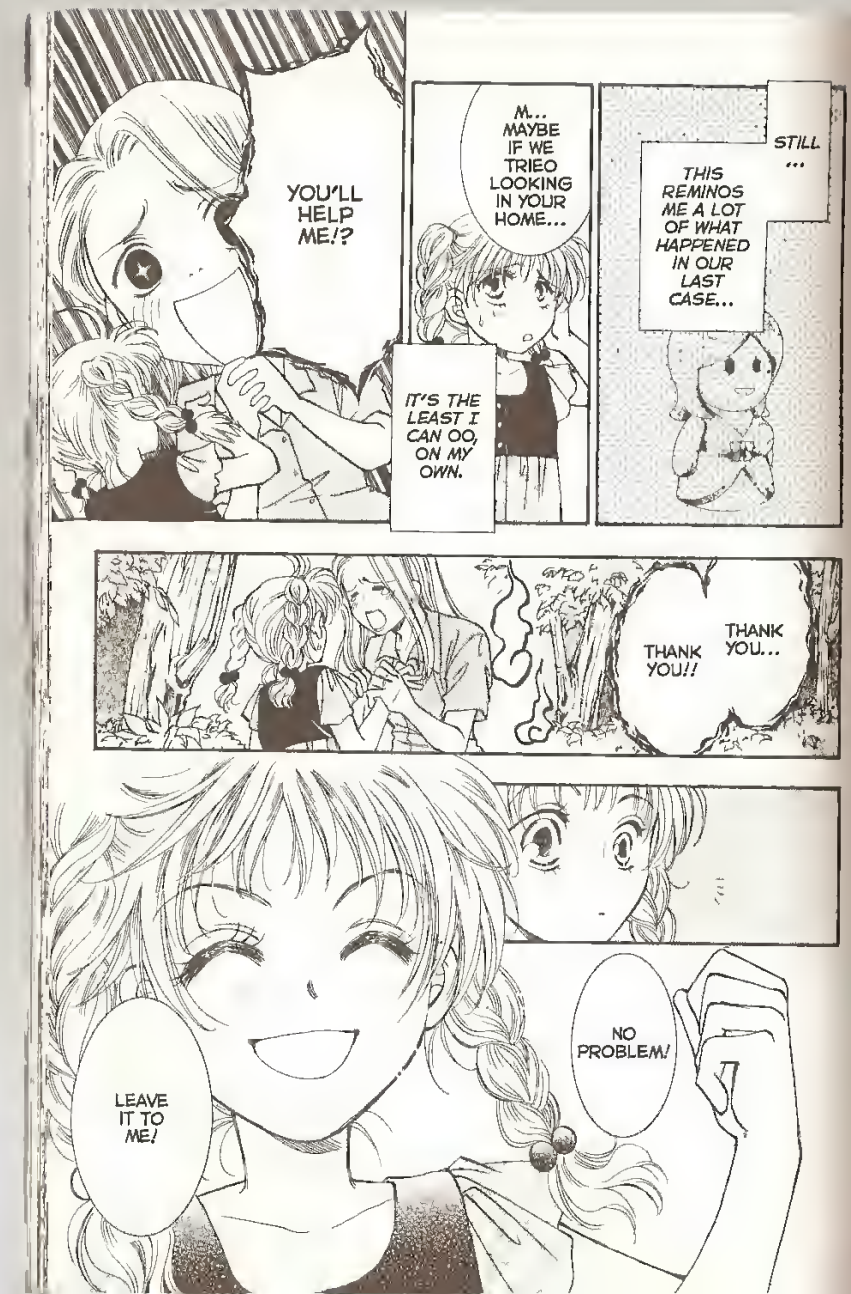

SHE'S THE TYPE YOU JUST WANT TO BULLY.
OH, WELL.

!
THAT MIGHT...
...BE TRUE.
A WALKING CORPSE, HUH?

SO...
TEARY
SO CRUEL...
THAT ...
...IS THE EPITOME OF A GHOST.
And she's super gloomy...
SOB SOB SOB
IT'S TOO MUCH TO TAKE!
CALLING ME AN IDIOT OUT OF THE BLUE LIKE THAT...
UM...
I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT YOU WHEN I SAID THAT...
Excuse me?
Miss ...?
THAT DOES IT! I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF!!
NOBODY SEES THE REAL ME...
EVERY-BODY'S ALWAYS MAKING FUN OF ME...

Banishing the shadows of anguish
SINCE IT ONLY GIVES ME CHILLS TO THINK ABOUT...
...OF COURSE I'M GOING TO AVOID DOING THAT!
ETC-ETERA !!
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
CHILL
STUPIIIID!!
EEK! I'M SORRY!!
HUH?


WONDERING IF... I'M EVEN THE CHIYAKO I USED TO KNOW...

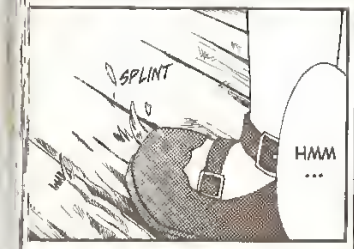

YOU'LL HELP ME!?
M... MAYBE IF WE TRIED LOOKING IN YOUR HOME...
IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO, ON MY OWN.
STILL ...
THIS REMINDS ME A LOT OF WHAT HAPPENED IN OUR LAST CASE...
THANK YOU!!
THANK YOU...
LEAVE IT TO ME!
NO PROBLEM!

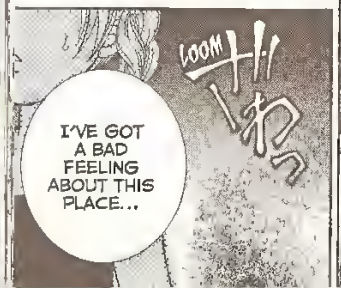
CROWD
EEEK!!
YOU CAN SEE ME!?

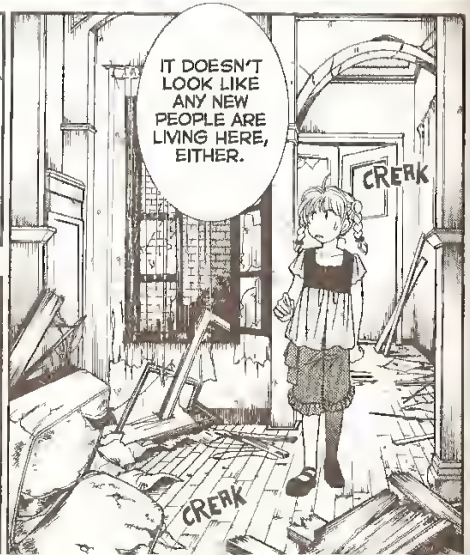
GLOOM GLOOM
.....
...AND I JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM HERE...
NOW THERE'S ANOTHER FAMILY LIVING IN MY HOUSE ...
I'll curse them all!
EVERYONE'S PROBABLY FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT ME!!
UM...
A ghost can't do it that way.

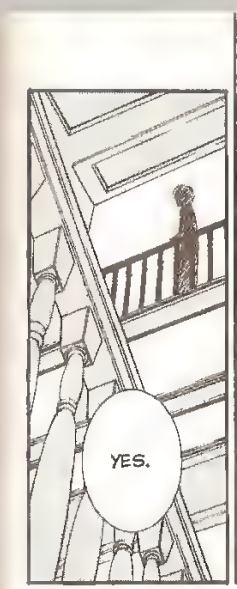
I...
SOB SOB
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO COME HOME SINCE IT WAS OBON, BUT...
...WHILE I WAS GONE, MY FAMILY MOVED AWAY...

THIS PLACE...
...DOESN'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE A HOME THAT'S IN USE.


SPLINT
HMM...


LOOM
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS PLACE...


IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANY NEW PEOPLE ARE LIVING HERE, EITHER.
CREAK
CREAK

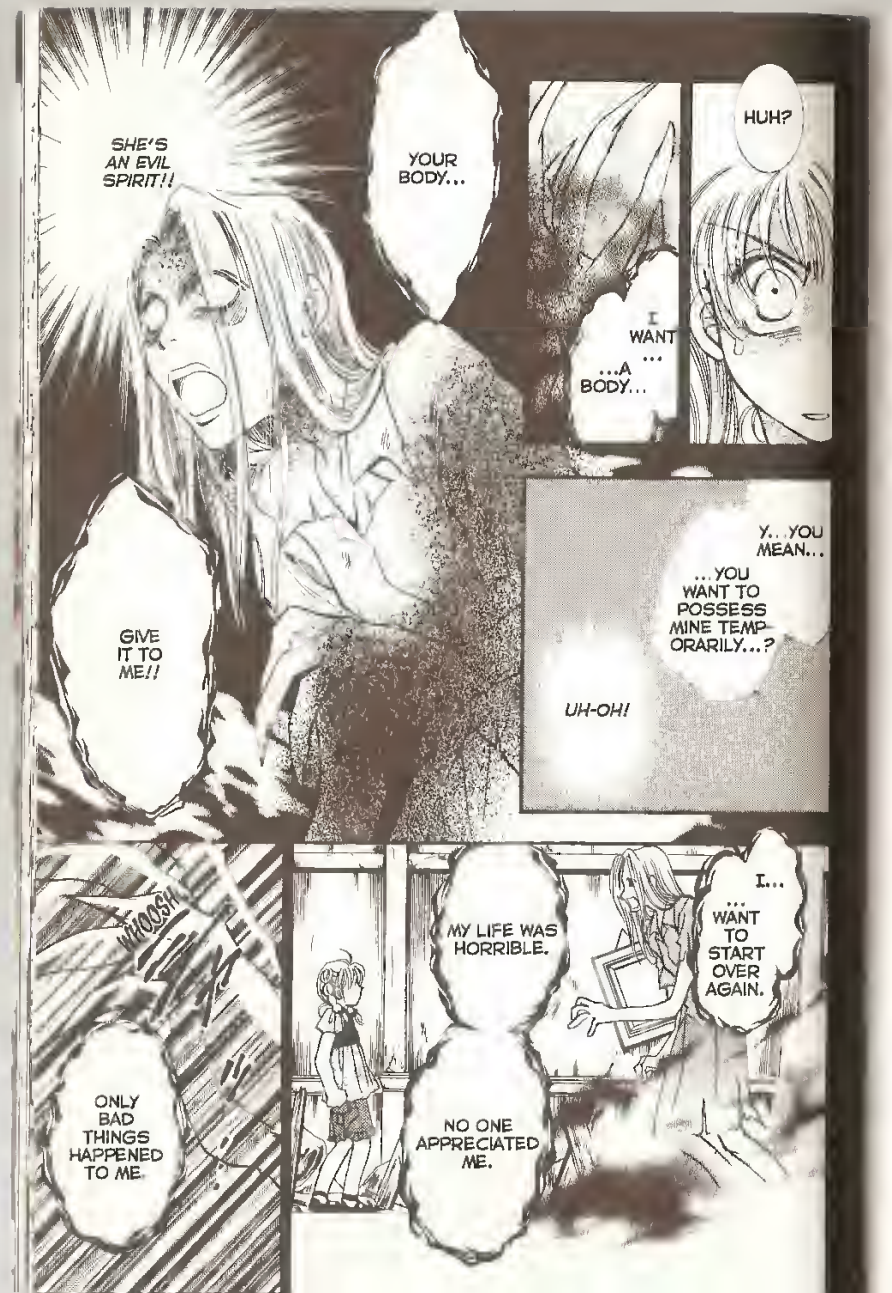

YES.

THERE'S NO MISTAKING THAT SHE'S SHIROGANE'S SPINNER.
YES.
THAT'S RIGHT.

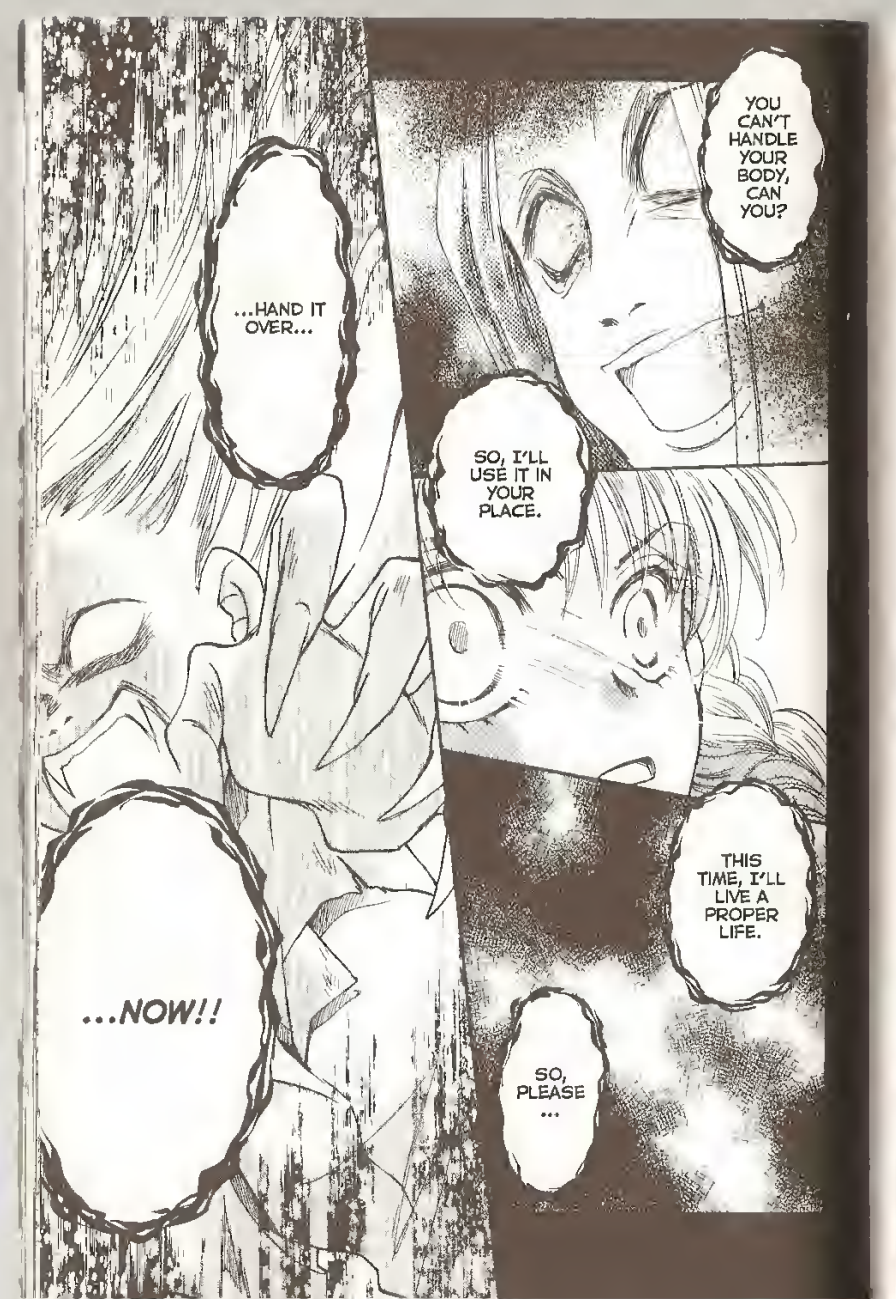
NOW, ALL THE FIVE COLORS ARE GATHERED.

FIRST, I HAD HER GUIDE ME TO HER OLD HOUSE LIKE WE DID LAST TIME.
BUT...

UNFORTUNATE AS IT IS TO SAY.


SHE'S AN EVIL SPIRIT!!
YOUR BODY...
HUH?
I WANT ... ...A BODY...
Y..YOU MEAN... ...YOU WANT TO POSSESS MINE TEMP ORARILY...?
UH-OH!
GIVE IT TO ME!!
WHOOSH
MY LIFE WAS HORRIBLE.
I... ... WANT TO START OVER AGAIN.
NO ONE APPRECIATED ME.
ONLY BAD THINGS HAPPENED TO ME.

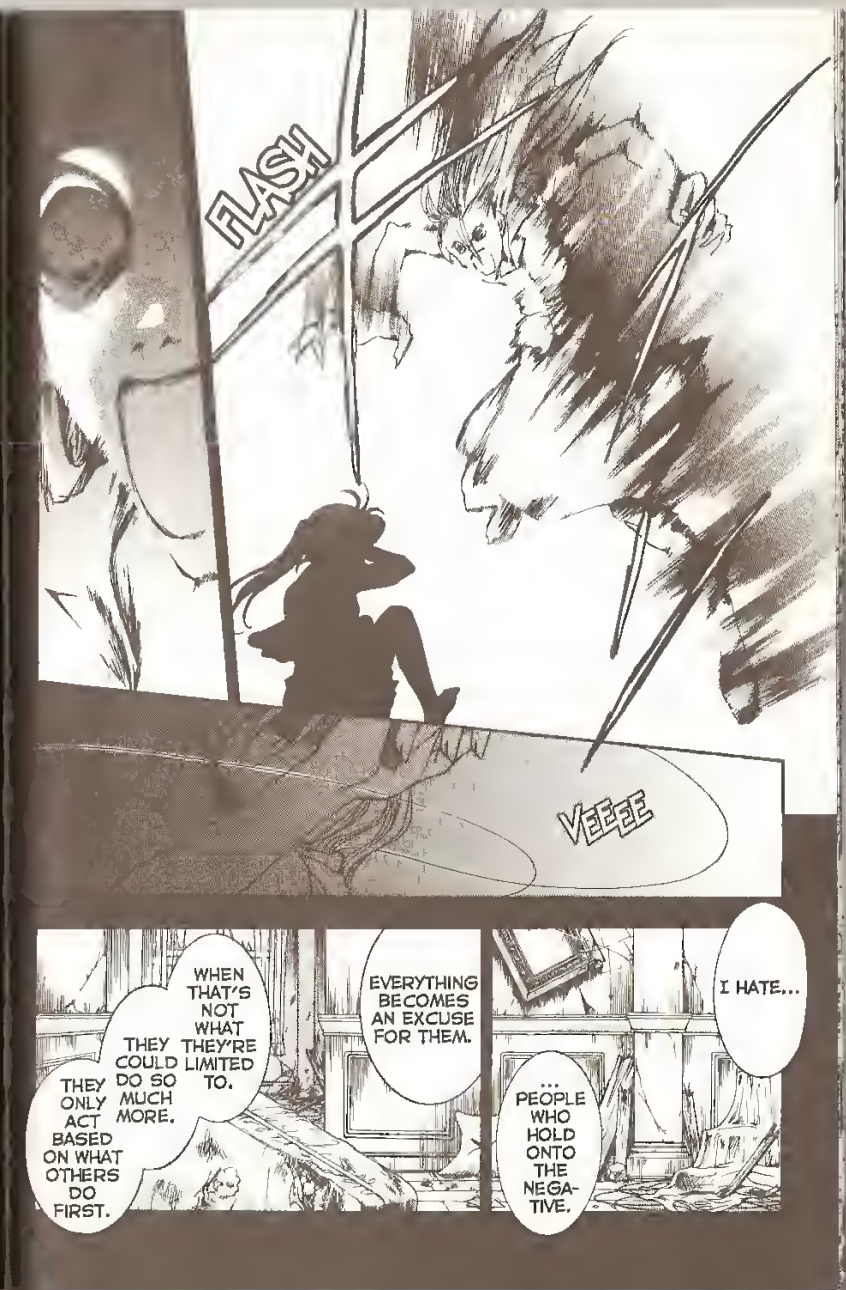
WAAH!!
TMP
I WANT IT...
I WANT IT...
HEY!!
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA!?

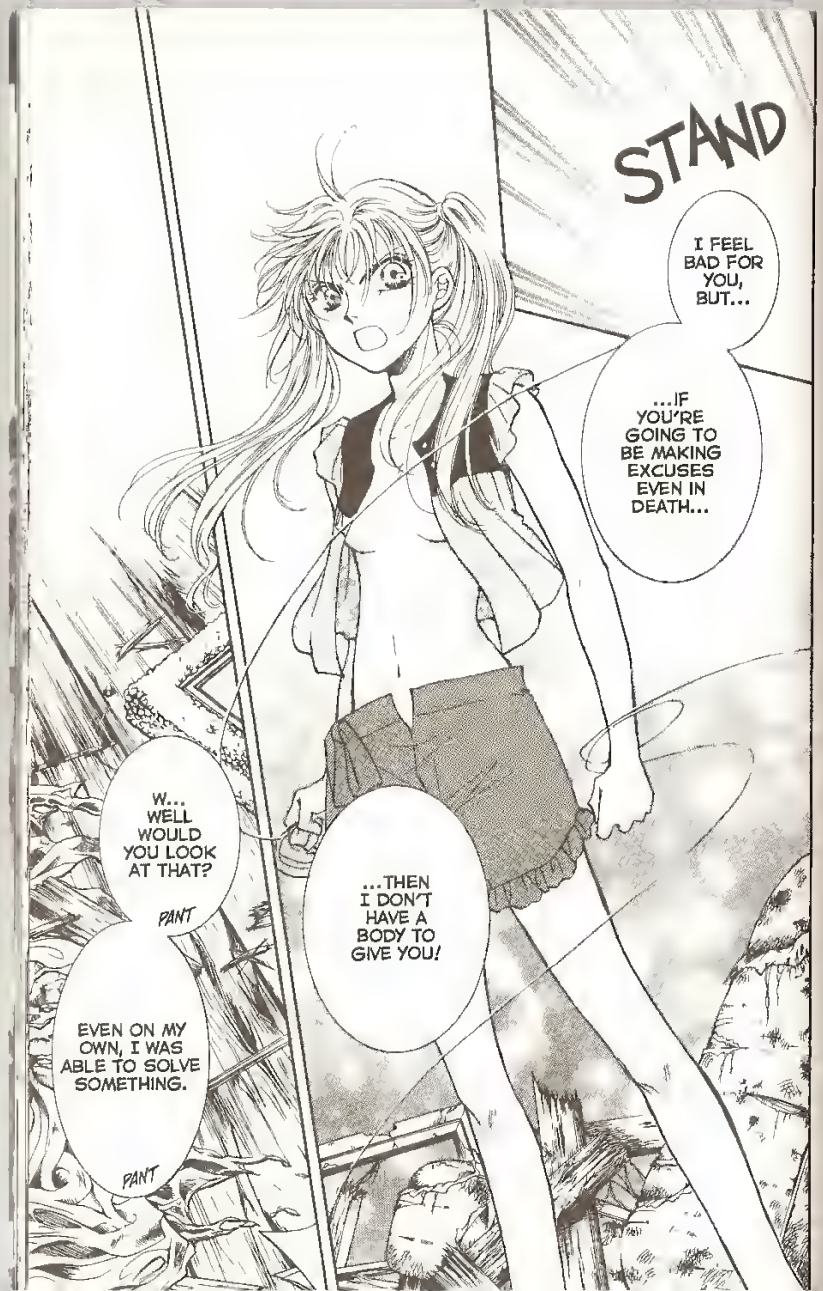

YOU CAN'T HANDLE YOUR BODY, CAN YOU?
...HAND IT OVER...
SO, I'LL USE IT IN YOUR PLACE.
...NOW!!
THIS TIME, I'LL LIVE A PROPER LIFE.
SO, PLEASE ...

WHOOSH
BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LEAVE THE DARK-
...RE-MAINING ONLY TO SUFFER.
I KILLED MYSELF, THINKING DEATH WOULD BRING ME PEACE.
DON'T YOU FEEL BAD FOR ME?
SMASH
SLAM

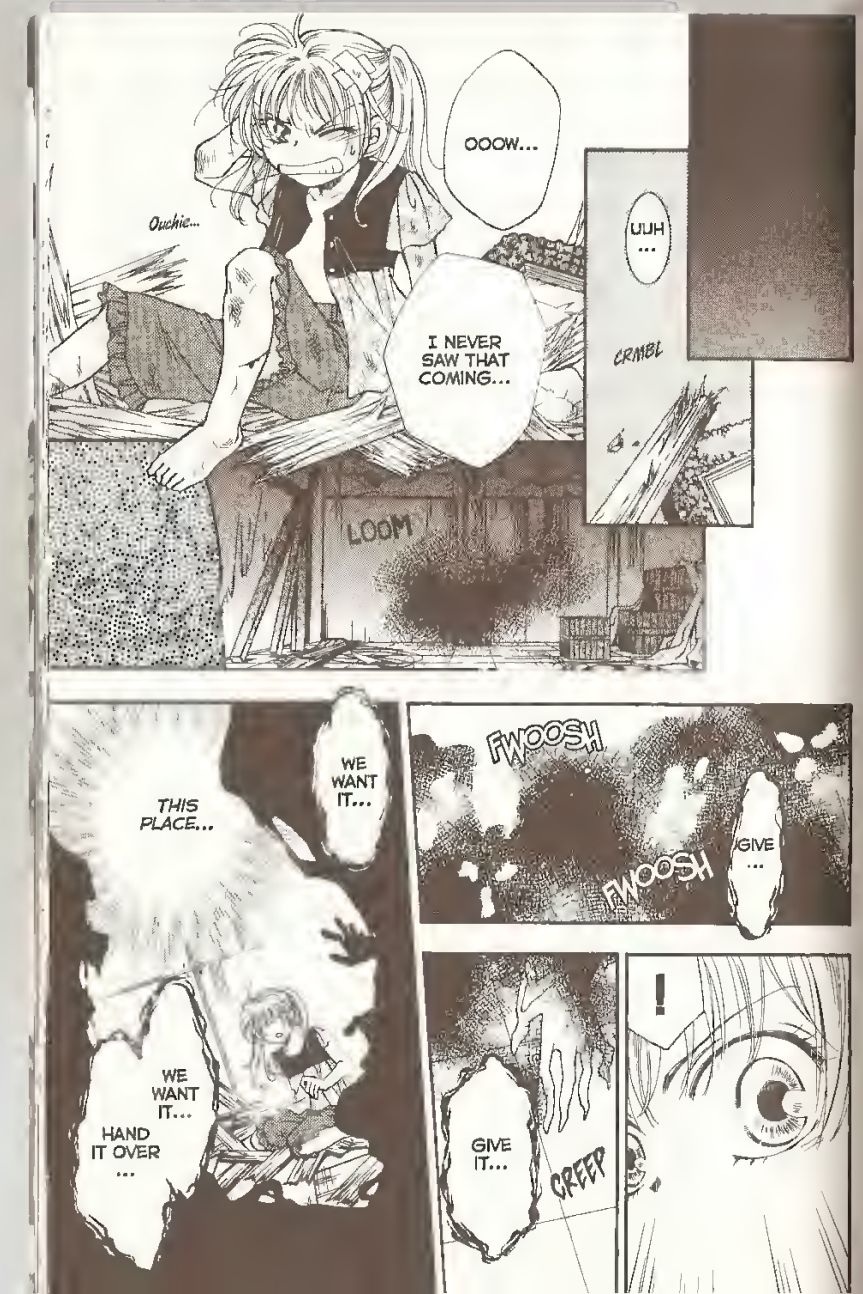
YOUR BODY...
...IS HOOORRIBLY UNSTABLE.
!
TRIP
WAH!
EEK!

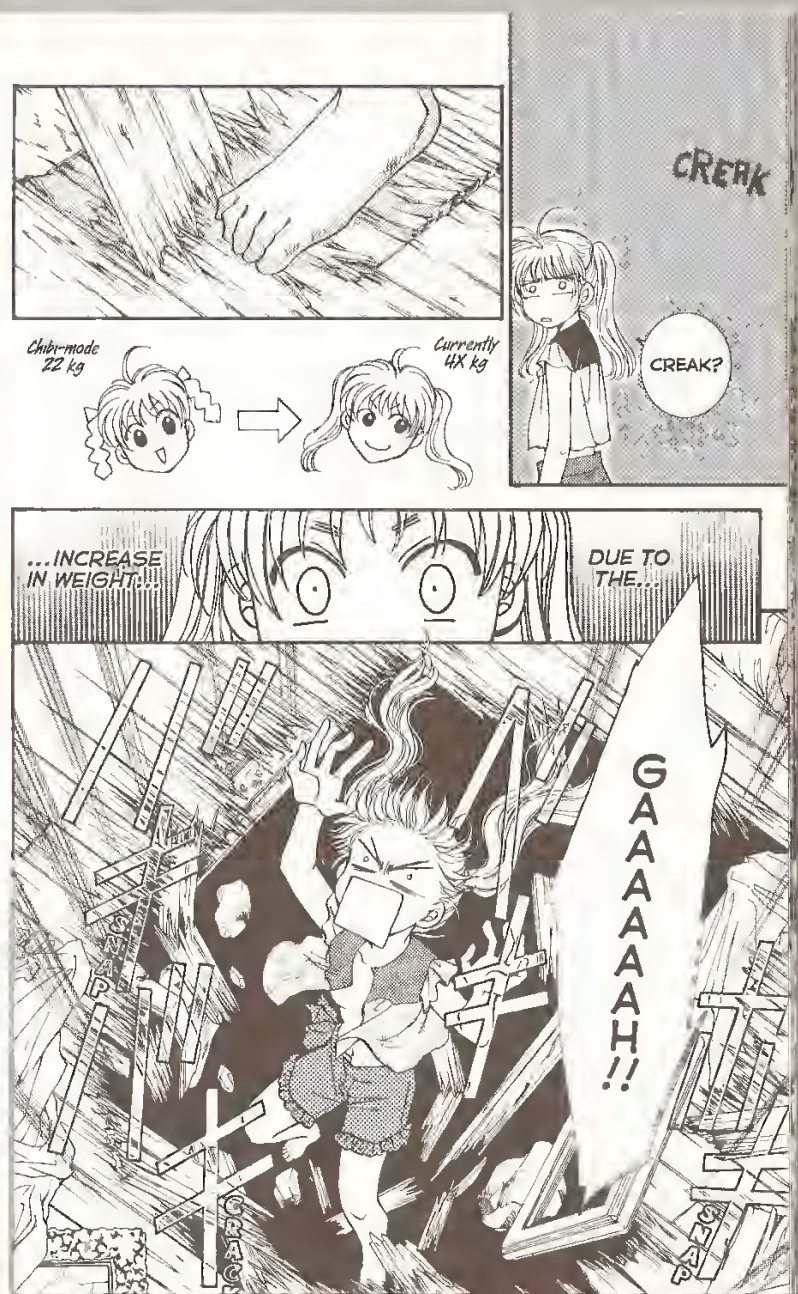
NOT WHEN OTHERS DO IT.
EVEN IF THINGS DON'T GO WELL...
...AND YOU GET SCARED...
...LIVING WHILE ALWAYS MAKING EXCUSES IS SOMETHING I NEVER LIKE TO SEE.
AND NOT WHEN I DO IT, EITHER!
SHIRO-GANE !!
GO...


FLASH
VEEEE
I HATE...
... PEOPLE WHO HOLD ONTO THE NEGA-TIVE.
EVERYTHING BECOMES AN EXCUSE FOR THEM.
WHEN THAT'S NOT WHAT THEY'RE LIMITED TO.
THEY COULD DO SO MUCH MORE.
THEY ONLY ACT BASED ON WHAT OTHERS DO FIRST.

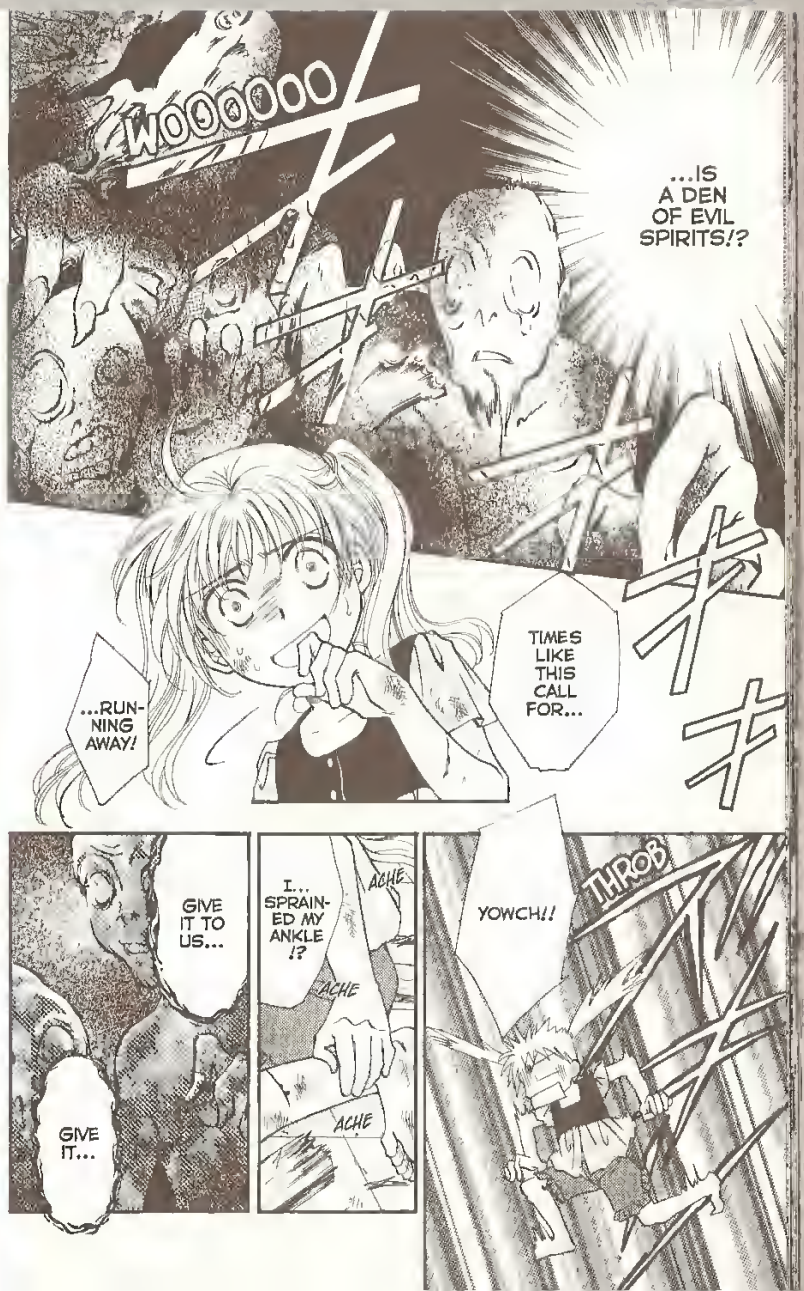

STAND
I FEEL BAD FOR YOU, BUT...
...IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE MAKING EXCUSES EVEN IN DEATH...
...THEN I DON'T HAVE A BODY TO GIVE YOU!
W... WELL WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT?
PANT
EVEN ON MY OWN, I WAS ABLE TO SOLVE SOMETHING.
PANT

WRAP
FADE
...TO BE...
THIS WASN'T HOW...
...IT WAS SUP-POSED ...
BUT...
I DON'T WANT THIS...


Ouchie...
OOOW...
I NEVER SAW THAT COMING...
UUH ...
CRMBL
LOOM
THIS PLACE...
WE WANT IT...
WE WANT IT...
HAND IT OVER ...
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
GIVE ...
GIVE IT...
CREEP
!


CREAK
CREAK?
Chibi-mode 22 kg
Currently 4X kg
...INCREASE IN WEIGHT!!!
DUE TO THE...
GAAAAAAH!!
SNAP
CRACK
SNAP

GRAB
EEK!
SHIRO ...!
KICK
WHY, YOU...!
KICK
GIVE IT TO US!!
STRAIN
NO!!
NO! NO! LET ME GO!!
STRUGGLE
I'M DONE FOR!!
AH ...!
THAT POWER...
HAND IT OVER ...

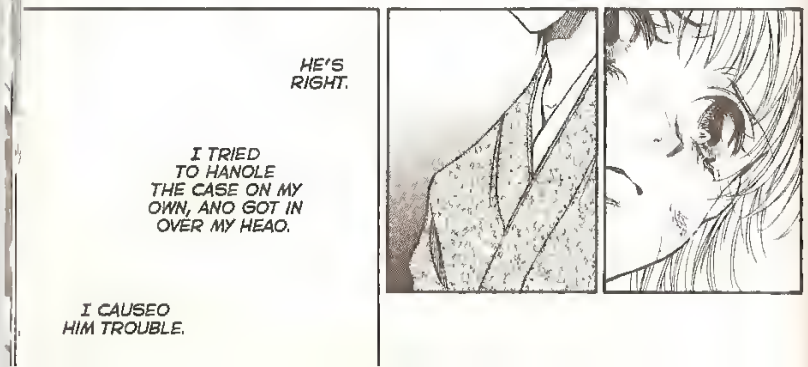

WOOOOOO
...IS A DEN OF EVIL SPIRITS!?
TIMES LIKE THIS CALL FOR...
...RUN-NING AWAY!
GIVE IT TO US...
GIVE IT...
I... SPRAIN-ED MY ANKLE !?
ACHE
ACHE
ACHE
YOWCH!!
THROB

MASTER!
YOU... CAME FOR ME...
FOR YOUR INFOR-MATION ...
THE ONE WHO TRACKED YOU HERE...
...WAS ME.
We're good at stepping in at just the right time.

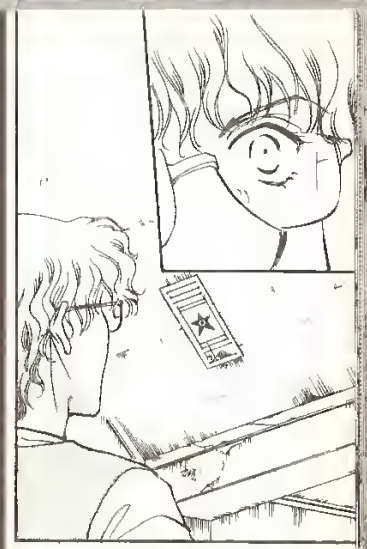
FWOOSH
GYAAAAH

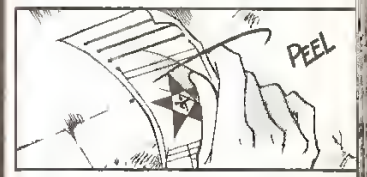
MASTER ...
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NOT TO USE YOUR POWER RECKLESSLY!
I...
SHRILL!

I'M...
I'M SORRY...
I MADE HIM...
...ANGRY!

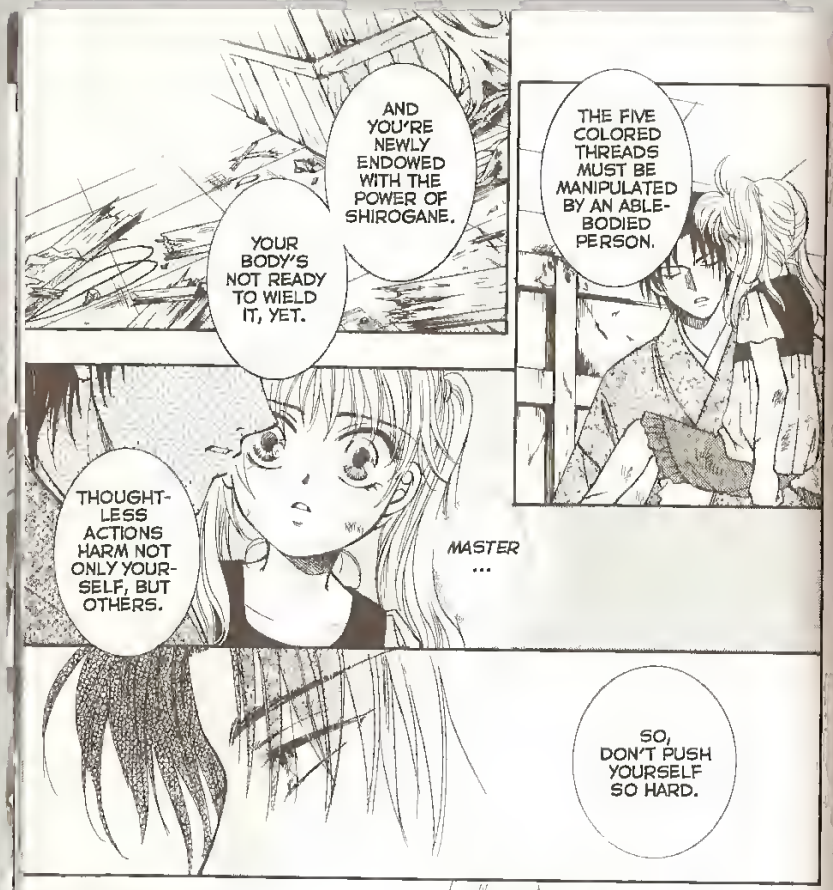

HE'S RIGHT.
I TRIED TO HANOLE THE CASE ON MY OWN, ANO GOT IN OVER MY HEAO.
I CAUSEO HIM TROUBLE.

WAS IT ACTUALLY WE TYERS WHO WERE THE TARGET?
OR...

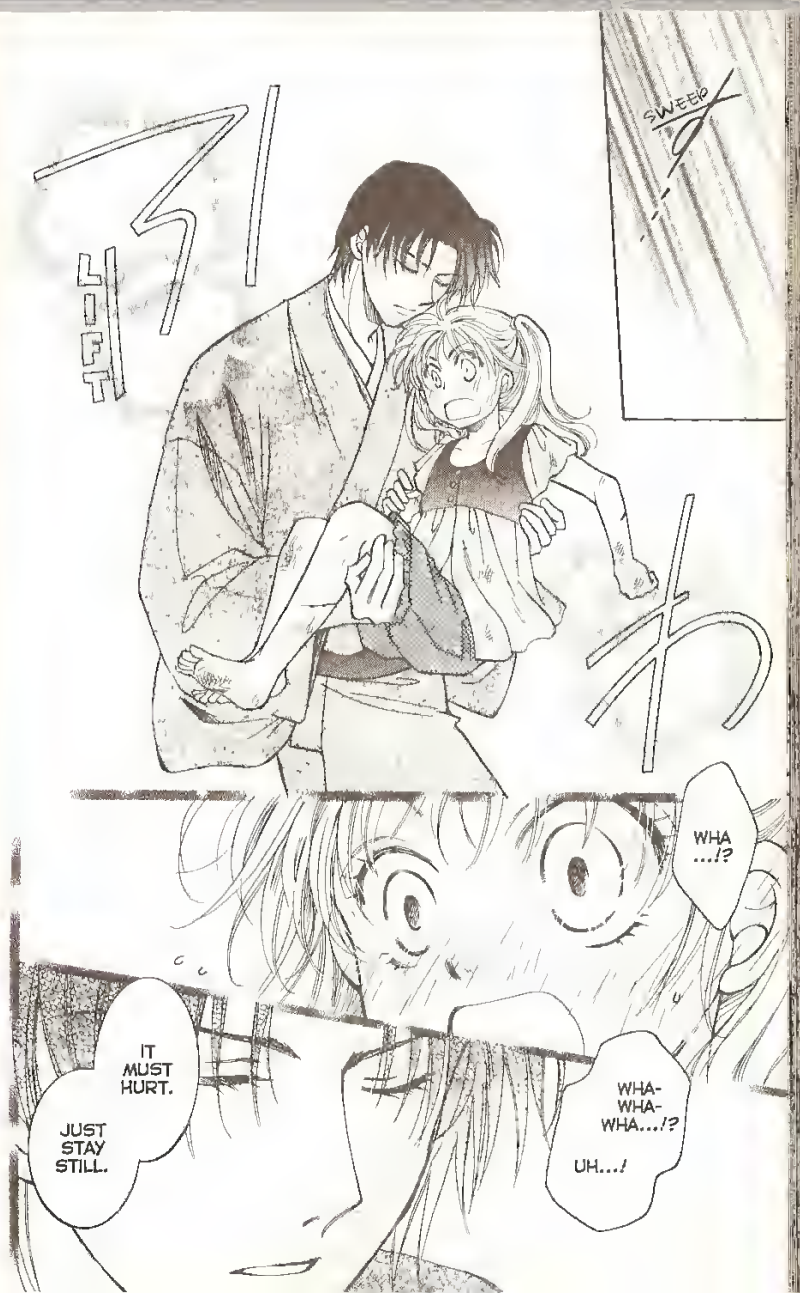


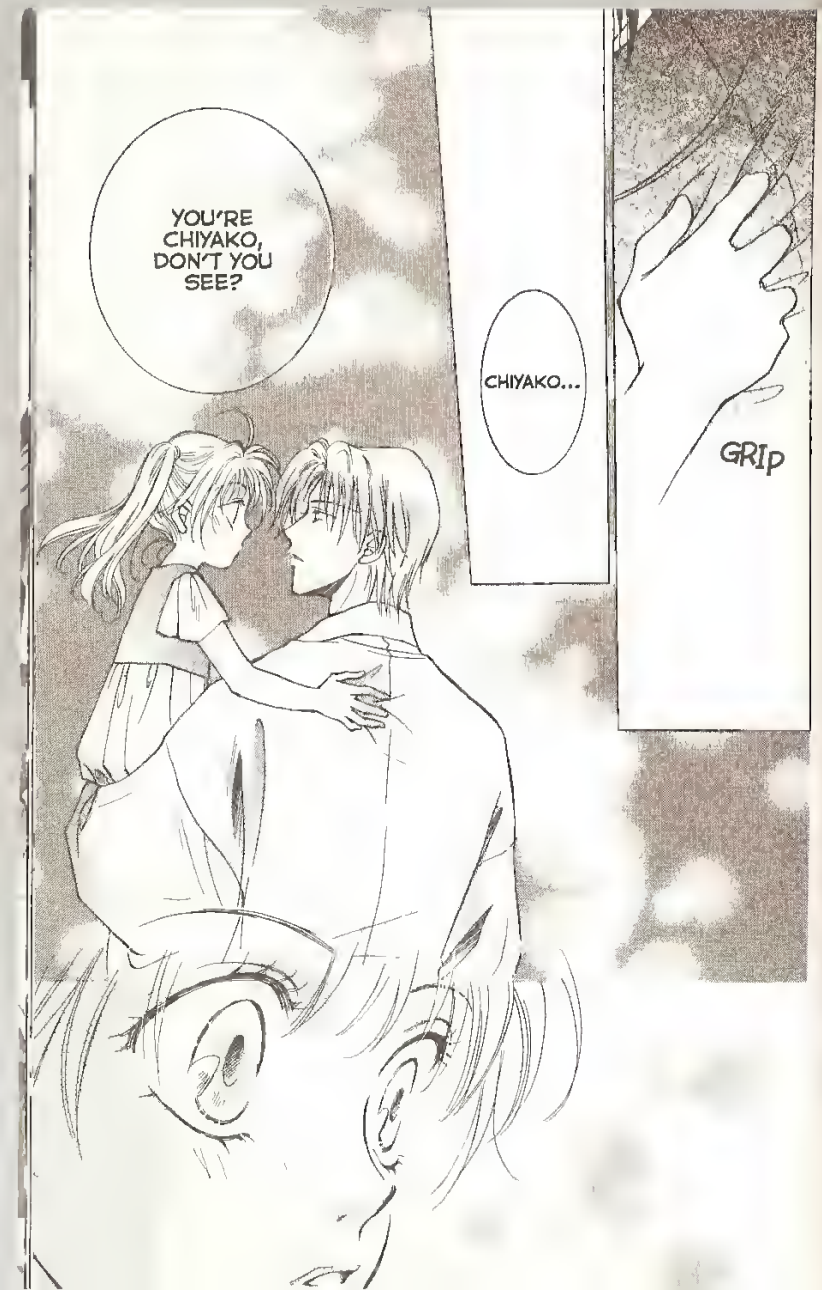

PEEL

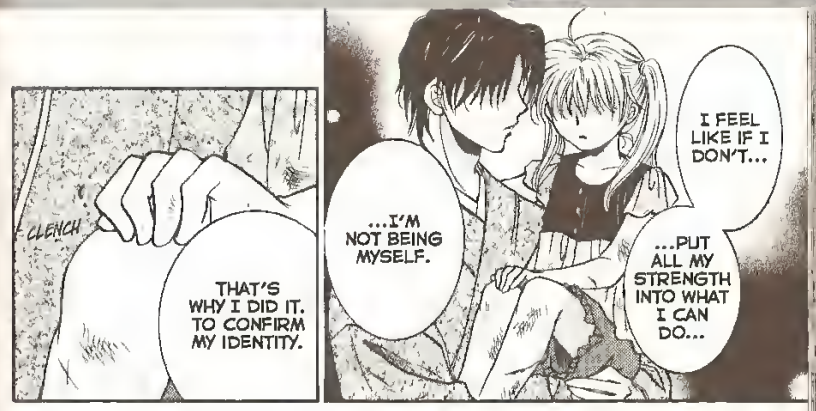
A SPIRIT CHARM ...
MEANING THAT SOME-BODY GATHERED THOSE EVIL SPIRITS HERE ON PURPOSE?

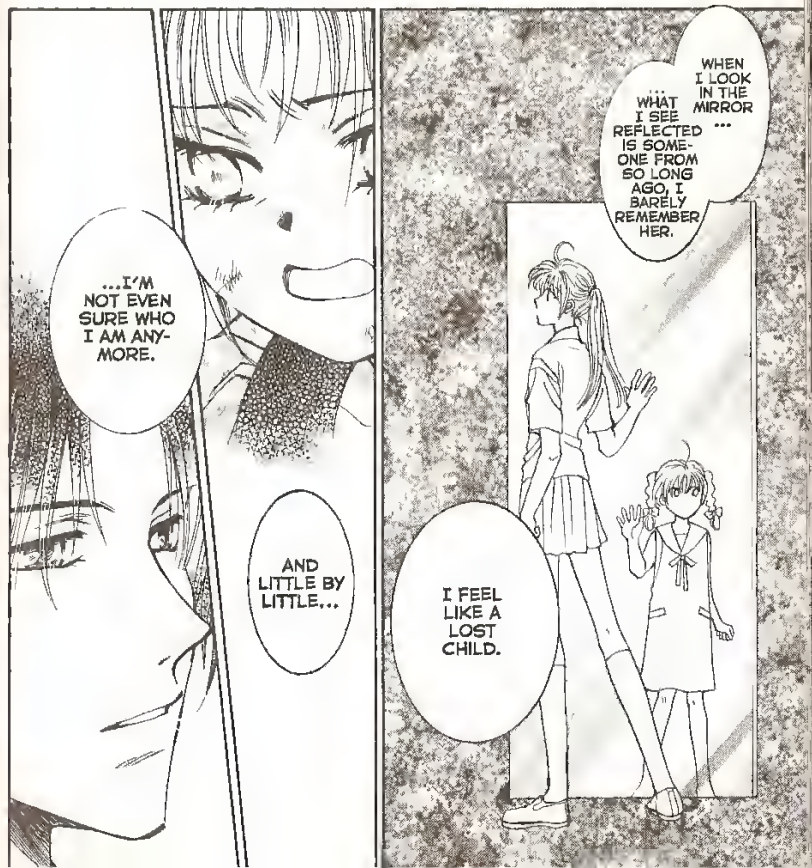

AND YOU'RE NEWLY ENDOWED WITH THE POWER OF SHIROGANE.
YOUR BODY'S NOT READY TO WIELD IT, YET.
THE FIVE COLORED THREADS MUST BE MANIPULATED BY AN ABLE-BODIED PERSON.
THOUGHT-LESS ACTIONS HARM NOT ONLY YOUR-SELF, BUT OTHERS.
MASTER ...
SO, DON'T PUSH YOURSELF SO HARD.

I...
I, UM...
HE'S...
...WORRIED ABOUT ME.

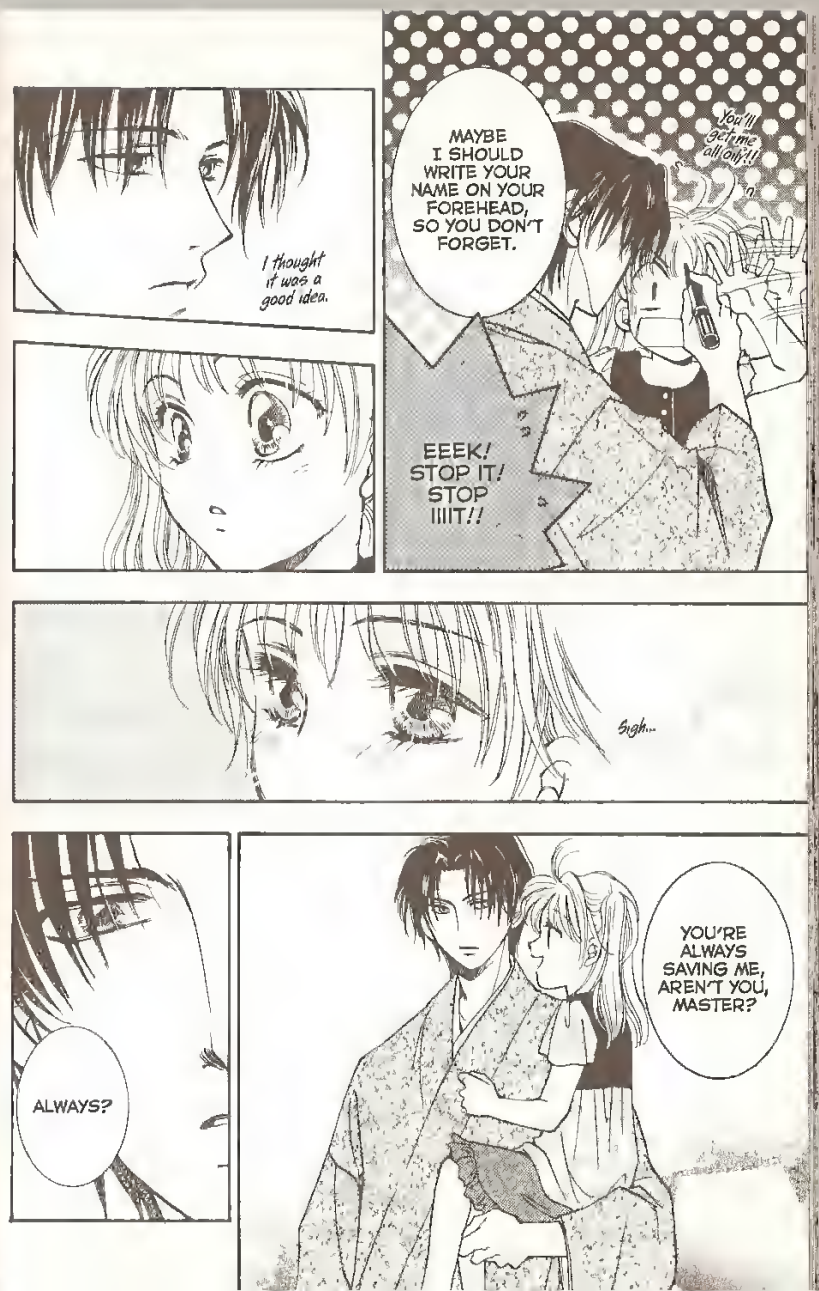

LIFT
SWEEP
WHA ...!?
WHA-WHA-WHA...!?
UH...!
IT MUST HURT.
JUST STAY STILL.


YOU'RE CHIYAKO, DON'T YOU SEE?
CHIYAKO...
GRIP


CLENCH
THAT'S WHY I DID IT. TO CONFIRM MY IDENTITY.
...I'M NOT BEING MYSELF.
I FEEL LIKE IF I DON'T...
...PUT ALL MY STRENGTH INTO WHAT I CAN DO...


...I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHO I AM ANY-MORE.
AND LITTLE BY LITTLE...
I FEEL LIKE A LOST CHILD.
... WHAT I SEE REFLECTED IS SOME-ONE FROM SO LONG AGO, I BARELY REMEMBER HER.
WHEN I LOOK IN THE MIRROR ...

OR, AT LEAST ...
...I WAS GOING TO ASK HIM.
Sleepy...
YEARS AGO...
...YOU ALSO SAVED ME, REMEMBER?
IT FELT GOOO TO BE CARRIED.
AND IN NO TIME AT ALL, I WAS DROWSY.


I thought it was a good idea.
MAYBE I SHOULD WRITE YOUR NAME ON YOUR FOREHEAD, SO YOU DON'T FORGET.
You'll get me all oily!!
EEEK! STOP IT! STOP IIIIT!!
Sigh...
ALWAYS?
YOU'RE ALWAYS SAVING ME, AREN'T YOU, MASTER?

OFF RECORDING #2

No matter what you say about my last series, the fact that the main character Amane was so passive as to be inactive was always very trying for me. This time around, I focused on that character point more than anything, and made a character who would "Speak up! Move around! Be a real weed of a girl!" As a result, Chiko became my forte default character. My friends call me a "straight up author" for that (ha). Am I really that noisy? She's sooo easy to put into action. While the legion of male characters is a little difficult to put into action...(sweat) The cast of characters will be increasing little by little, so next time, I have to really make them take action!

Thanks to the personality of the protagonist, and other reasons, I am always writing the motto of "Bound Beauty" to be "very lively". I had the tendency to overdo it on the inclusion of my personal tastes, and things I think are fun (ha) and just jam-packed the series with that sort of stuff. So, it'd make me super happy if those of you who read it could enjoy it in the same way. And so it is with that, that I vow to trample any false promises and sly plot twists!

The story develops with all sorts of mysteries being hinted at, and some not, but my expectations for the next volume are bright...I think? (ha) I'm always agonizing over how the next episode will go, but I'm really going to put my all into it, so I hope you all please read the next volume, too. Also, please let me hear about your impressions, opinions, and favorite characters. Well, until we meet again. May our strings of fate cross in volume 2~ ♥

2006 MICK

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http://id74.net

I'm waiting for your impressions ♥

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Agoura Hills, CA 91301

SPECIAL THANKS
TAKI TAKI, MU-CHAN, DOKUMI,
RIU A, HI-TAN, TOHRU K.,
KAMINA, NAKANO, MAMI,
K SAITOH, C.ITAKA, MY FAMILY
and YOU!!

bound beauty (1) / end

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Pg. 5 – red thread
The superstition that everybody is tied at the pinky finger by an invisible red thread to the person they are destined to love.

Pg. 13 – Asakusa Samba Carnival
A brightly colored and scantily clad Brazilian festival at the height of summer in the streets of the Asakusa district of Tokyo.

Pg. 17 – Yuma-tan
The suffix "tan" is a super cute ending, since it's the childish pronunciation of "chan". Kind of like saying "I wuv you" instead of "I love you," in English.

Pg. 17 – *Tanabata*
Tanabata is a star festival held July 7th in Japan. Also known as the "Festival of the Weaver", it is a day of prayer and celebration in honor of the legend revolving around the Milky Way. The legend dictates that the two fated lovers of Orihime (Vega) and Hikoboshi (Altair) are granted only one yearly meeting, on July 7th, to cross the Milky Way of stars and be united for one night. Tanabata charms are little slips of paper that participants of the celebration write their wishes on—sometimes in the form of a poem—in hopes that they will be granted. The charms are hung on bamboo plants and either sent afloat down local rivers, or burned after the festival.

Pg. 25 – 肉
The symbol drawn on Chiko's forehead means "meat" and is a famous image from the classic *manga*-turned-*anime* "*Kinnikuman*" or "Ultimate Muscle" as it was called during its brief airing in the United States. The main character Kinnikuman was a wrestler, and the whole series was very testosterone-driven. So, having a prank like that pulled on you is much like being called "muscle head" or something similar.

Pg. 42 – five colored threads
Originating from Buddhist beliefs, this is the color system that symbolizes the five physical senses of taste, sight, hearing, smell, and touch. These threads were also used in a death ceremony to aid the person involved in finding the right path to the afterlife.

Pg. 42 – *Shirogane*
"Shirogane" means "silver," as in the metal. It is the name of Chiko's newly found member of the five colored threads, the white, metal-based thread.

Pg. 120 – *tsukumogami*
A type of Japanese spirit said to originate from items or artifacts that have reached their 100th birthday, and thus become alive and aware.

Pg. 126 – *Ojin*
"Ojin" literally means "dust storm", but is the name of Hirotsuna's gold earth-based thread.

Pg. 152 – *Obon*
This Buddhist festival is a several-day celebration in honor of the departed spirits of one's ancestors in the month of August. Members of the family gather with the belief that members past, too, will be joining them as they visit grave sites and offer prayers.

Pg. 153 – *nagashi soumen*
Meaning "flowing noodles", this popular summertime meal involves running thin noodles down a bamboo trough. Diners sit along the length of the trough, trying to catch the noodles with their chopsticks as they flow by. It takes some time to set up, what with needing to halve a bamboo into a trough, and eating in such a passive manner. The ultimate display of taking it easy!

NAME PAGE

Pg. 11 – *Chiyako Goto*
茅子 The first symbol in Chiyako's name is a variety of hay, commonly used for thatching, which fits in nicely with the overall theme of binding and threads in this manga.

Pg. 12 -- *Hirotsuna Tachibana*
人綱 Hirotsuna's first name means "thick cord". Yet another significant name in this manga about threads.

Pg. 21 – *Akeo Nagumo*
明緒 – Akeo's first name means "flourishing strap" Yet another significant name in this manga about threads.

Pg. 28 – *Aya*
綾 The symbol making up Aya's name means "twill weave" like one would find with cloth. Yet another significant name in this manga about binding and threads